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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 :
G06F 17/60

A2

(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/55787

(43) International Publication Date: 21 September 2000 (21.09.00)

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/06648

(22) International Filing Date: 15 March 2000 (15.03.00)

(30) Priority Data:
09/267,660 15 March 1999 (15.03.99) US

(71) Applicant: TELEZOO.COM CORPORATION [US/US]; Suite 704, 1600 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22209 (US).

(72) Inventors: SHAMS, Elias; 4411 Cathedral Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20016 (US). VED, Rajeev; 12606 Gray Eagle Court #33, Germantown, MD 20874 (US).

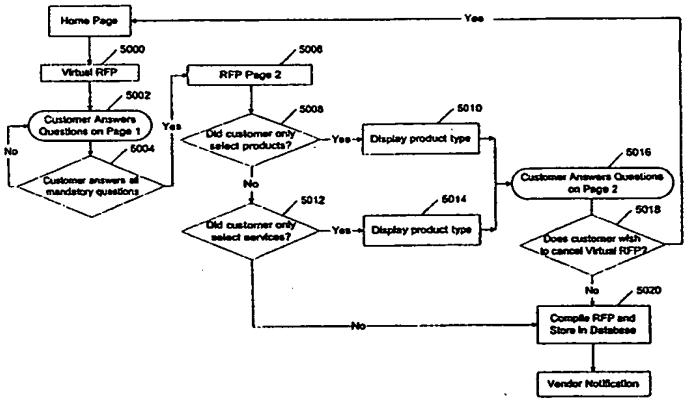
(74) Agents: PADE, Jeffrey, A. et al.; Cooley Godward LLP, Attn: Patent Group, One Freedom Square, 11951 Freedom Drive, Reston, VA 20190-5601 (US).

(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published

Without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report.

(54) Title: SYSTEM FOR AN ON-LINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SEARCH ENGINE AND MARKETPLACE



(57) Abstract

A web-based/Internet system that serves as a search engine/source for any information related to the Telecommunications Industry, and also as an e-commerce site. The invention includes information on: (1) products, (2) services, (3) system solutions, (4) requests for proposals, (5) posted tenders, (6) financing plans, (7) news related to investments, telecommunications regulations, and product news, (8) job postings, (9) telecommunications and networking companies, (10) educational material [white papers, technical Q & A], and (11) purchase products. The invention provides a comprehensive site and marketplace for the telecommunications industry. This invention presents an improved and unbiased methodology for product and service comparison. It has created a normalized database for every telecommunications product and service. The database is segmented into partitions for each individual vendor, service provider, system integrator and university. Thereby giving each participant ownership and proprietary control over the data contained within the site. The invention puts forth a methodology/tool, the Virtual RFP, that will allow prospective buyers of telecommunications products or related services to make a request for proposals via the internet, whereby service subscribers can view the request and electronically respond back through the system. Thus, giving an efficient, paper-less process for soliciting and offering telecommunications products and services.

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SYSTEM FOR AN ON-LINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SEARCH ENGINE AND MARKETPLACE

BACKGROUND

1. Field Of The Invention

The present invention relates to a system and unique processes (search capability, database normalization, etc.) for presenting information related to the field of telecommunications and where applicable provide a manner whereby the customer can purchase products or services via the Internet. Specifically, the invention also includes the "Virtual RFP." The Virtual RFP is a service by which the customer can create an on-line request for proposals, information, or quotes from various "vendors" -- equipment manufacturers, service providers and system integrators, for telecommunications and services.

2. Description of the Related Art

Currently, Information Technology (IT) professionals and even the everyday consumer are presented with vast amounts of information regarding telecommunications products and services. Moreover, the information presented is often hard to find and understand. Vendors do not agree upon a common set of terms or phrases to describe the same set of features and specifications of their product. Thereby, making it difficult for a "consumer" to make an educated and well-informed decision. Traditionally, the only way such information could be obtained was through a process of initial inquiry, followed by phone calls, an eventual meeting and the provision of some documented information that does not include much detail with respect to functionality and specifications.

On the other hand, should the user be successful in finding information relevant or useful to what they seek, there is still the question of objectivity. Several manufacturers even compare their products with those of their competition. However, it can be said with some degree of certainty that the comparison is not done from the perspective of an independent authority. Oftentimes the comparison is between a

model and those that are not of the same performance level or function set. Moreover, the genuine perception of the user is jaded towards a company conducting a comparison and illustrating that its product or service is superior. The need exists for an independent information broker where a level forum ("playing field") can be established and a comparison where products are put side by side in similar categories (the proverbial "apples to apples" and "oranges to oranges").

Vendors also face several challenges in trying to find other vendors that meet their needs. A typical example is an equipment manufacturer trying to find a system integrator that can install and maintain equipment that they have sold to a customer. Another challenge faced by vendors is the fact that many vendors, particularly equipment manufacturers sell their products through re-sellers. Oftentimes, these re-sellers do not keep the most up to date information with respect to product line. Furthermore, to the dismay of manufacturers, resellers will sell equipment no longer manufactured or supported by a vendor. This impacts both sides of the supply chain in that consumers are left with a now obsolete product and the manufacturer is now not viewed favorably by the consumer for future considerations. Vendors strongly desire to have control over their product offering to the public with precise accuracy.

Vendors are also constantly striving to educate existing and potential customers on new technologies, specific product and service offerings. The benefit to the vendor is the positive public relations generated in showing an interest to educate the consumer. In addition, a greater product, and more importantly, brand awareness is generated, whereby potentially new customers, markets, and business leads can be found.

The search for new customers, markets, business leads, and revenue is the continuous mission for vendors. This is especially true for equipment manufacturers who are constantly looking for new markets. As has happened with other segments of today's world, the Internet has offered a method for manufacturers to achieve this latter objective. The most vivid example of this effort is the direct sales and lead channel model established by Dell® Computer Corporation. Most manufacturers have yet to establish such a direct channel and are looking for other avenues via re-sellers or other entities.

Vendors have proceeded to develop World Wide Web ("Web") sites where customers could obtain information in response to the promise that the Internet holds. Initially, it was envisioned that the Internet in conjunction with a Web site would be the answer. This hope was even further heightened with the development and proliferation of sophisticated search engines like Yahoo!®, AltaVista™, Lycos®, and Infoseek®.

For a variety of reasons, this approach has not worked. Included amongst these reasons is the fact that vendors still control what information they wish to share. This includes the prevailing condition where no set standard of terms and descriptions exists or has been agreed upon. Furthermore, many of the web sites that have been constructed by the vendors for the purposes of public/investor relations. Thus, making it time consuming for potential "customers" (System Integrators, Re-sellers, Consumers") to find any information relative to the product they are seeking.

The promise of the search engine has also failed for similar reasons. The premise behind the search engine is its first shortcoming in that it is focused on a key word within a Web page or site. This can generate results that are misleading in that it will take the seeker to a page that is marginally related to the specific item the user is seeking. Similarly, a limitation inherent to such search engines is that the results will often lead to "dead" or "old" links, whereby a user will be sent to a Web location no longer in existence. Thereby furthering delaying the process and heightening user frustration.

The last challenge has been when a user has specific requirements and may be familiar with technologies and their requirements but has to actually either acquire the products or services that matches their needs. In most instances, this is not the case. The end-user has only a general idea of what they wish to acquire, and the process involved can be tedious, time-consuming, and cumbersome. In many instances, both end user and product/service providers have to deal with some form of a third party.

These and other drawbacks exist.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to solve these and other drawbacks with existing systems.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a system and its native processes that can solve the multitude of challenges faced by users and vendors.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a fast, easy to access, and easy to use system for enabling users and vendors to meet.

This invention is the single solution to all these challenges by presenting a Internet based site where users can obtain detailed specifications on products and services. The invention provides a fast and efficient manner where users can obtain detailed specifics regarding specific telecommunications products and services, and system integrators. In particular, the search engine brings the information together in a matter of minutes. The average time to display product information in a side by side comparison is 1 minute (dependent upon the total volume of traffic on the Internet). Moreover, it presents the information via a normalized template where like is compared to like. The information contained is neutral, since in that every product/service within the invention is controlled by the respective vendor.

The invention also provides the first effective manner where a user can find a product or service that meets their specific needs. The invention accomplishes this by allowing the user to answer specific key questions that are universal to all products or services within a category. Again, the average time required to find a number of products is 1 minute. The user is allowed to constantly refine their search until they find a product or service that meets their needs.

In both of the above instances the invention displays detailed information of the selected products. Furthermore, the invention contains manners by which the user can go directly to the respective vendors Web page for the specific product. The distinct factor is that the information presented is independent of any vendor influence and that the user can make a well-informed decision in a very short time all from the convenience of access to the Internet.

The invention also provides a way for vendors to meet their needs. The invention provides a system for manufacturers to directly market only those products that they wish to either promote or currently support. Thereby eliminating the possibility of marketing and offering to consumers discontinued products.

The invention also provides a manner where vendors can educate the public by providing a mechanism where vendors can place their "white papers" on the invention

platform. "White Papers" are short topical reports that explain new or emerging technologies and their applications. Within the same platform vendors can post "System Solutions" which present their respective solutions to challenges faced by particular industries. This aspect of the invention also serves the purpose of generating brand awareness and establishing customer relations.

The invention also accomplishes the objective of identifying new customers, establishing new marketing channels, and generating sales leads. The system according to the present invention thereby provides a new marketing channel for vendors, enabling them to extend their efforts in establishing or augmenting their Internet sales channel via the use of banner ads and promotional areas contained within the inventions format that appears to the user. Moreover, when the customer performs the product comparison or search function the option to "purchase" the product is provided to the user. The "purchase" is either the option to buy directly or result in a sales lead for the vendor that the invention provides electronically.

The invention accomplishes the last goal of confining the entire process and facilitating direct contact between the entity (individual, group, organization, etc.) seeking to acquire products or services and the vendors that provide them. The invention provides an easy to use interface via the Web whereby a "buyer" with specific needs or just a general idea can generate a request for proposal that is sent directly to all vendors who participate in this service. The "Virtual RFP" brings the buyer directly to the vendor and vice versa via the Internet. Furthermore, the process can be done entirely free of paper thereby facilitating the efforts of many to move towards a paper-less work environment.

Another feature of the present invention is that it facilitates direct interface between the buyer and the provider and opening a direct sales/lead generator channel. The "Posted Tenders" feature allows a buyer to post a document with specific requirements and needs that the vendors can retrieve and subsequently bid on.

The invention also provides four services that benefit both the consumer and the vendor. The invention contains a function where any user on the site including non-IT professionals can find a degree in or related to the field of Telecommunications. This includes Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, and related fields for degrees at all levels. The invention also includes a job posting board where both parties can search

and post job openings. The invention also includes an acronym and definition feature for all telecommunications related terms. Finally, a technical question and answer service is provided where any user can post a technical question for any user accessing this feature and hopefully obtain an answer.

The invention also provides several other services to all. In this aspect the invention serves primarily as an information source that is convenient to all users. Included in this feature are news services related to telecommunications law, technology and business, stock quotes, an index of all telecommunications, and networking companies. It also includes a stock quote and portfolio function. Both the news services and portfolio feature will include the ability to be customized as part of a larger scheme where the user can customize the features and settings of the invention to their individual preferences.

Other objects, advantages and features of the present invention may be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art upon reviewing the following detailed description of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a high level illustration of the input process where the customer in this case is a vendor who wishes to add their product/service line to the invention, where the vendor logs in via the Internet and has sole access and control over their partition within the database.

FIG. 2 is a process flow diagram showing the options presented to the end-user via the home page, with each potential action by the user takes them to a separate or series of actions.

FIG. 3 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to compare products, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for comparing products.

FIG. 4 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to find products, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for finding products.

FIG. 5 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to find a telecommunications related degree, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for finding a degree.

FIG. 6 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided find a job, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for finding, posting, and responding to job inquiries.

FIG. 7 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to examine various financing plans offered by vendors, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for examining vendor finance plans.

FIG. 8 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user (specifically a vendor) has decided to retrieve and subsequently reply to a posted tender, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for retrieving posted tenders.

FIG. 9 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to obtain news related to the stock market, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for obtaining stock market information including quotes, summary of user portfolios, and market related news.

FIG. 10 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to read news articles related to telecommunications regulations and law, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for reading such news.

FIG. 11 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to read press releases from telecommunications companies, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for reading press releases.

FIG. 12 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to read news articles related to technology specifically related to telecommunications, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for reading such news.

FIG. 13 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to look up an acronym and its definition, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for acronym lookup.

FIG. 14 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to obtain a listing of telecommunications and networking companies, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for finding companies.

FIG. 15 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to find white papers related to telecommunications topics, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for acquiring these papers.

FIG. 16 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to enter the technical question and answer area for the purposes of exchanging ideas/information, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for entering this area.

FIG. 17 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has clicked on a banner advertisement, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions when a user takes this action.

FIG. 18 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has clicked on a promotion, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions when a user takes this action.

FIG. 19 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user (vendor/university) has decided to log in or register with the service, and concerns the steps, method, and actions for logging in.

FIG. 20 is a schematic branching from FIG. 19 where the user has decided to sign-in and perform product entry and maintenance (enter, copy, delete, and edit), and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for product action.

FIG. 21 is a schematic branching from FIG. 20 where the user has decided to enter a new product/service, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for entering products.

FIG. 22 is a schematic branching from FIG. 20 where the user has decided to edit an existing product/service, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for editing products.

FIG. 23 is a schematic branching from FIG. 2 where the user has decided to create a Virtual RFP, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for the user to create a Virtual RFP.

FIG. 24 is a schematic branching from FIG. 23 where the user (registered vendor) receives notification of a Virtual RFP matching their business area interests and can subsequently retrieve this document on-line, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for the user to retrieve a Virtual RFP.

FIG. 25 is a schematic branching from FIGS 3. and 4 where the user has been taken to the Product Description Page, and concerns the steps, methods, and actions for the user once they are into the Product Description Page.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present invention presents a new method and manner for the following with respect to the field of telecommunications: marketing products and services, finding detailed information on products and services, comparing products and services, finding a degree program, finding or posting a job opportunity, finding a system integrator, learning more about specific topics within the field through published papers, reading news related to all aspects of the industry, finding information to specific issues, finding a company, looking up acronyms and definitions, creating a request for proposals, purchasing and may be limited to a specific category of products, including products that cost less than $10,000, and generating solid marketing leads for items exceeding this amount. The system may be implemented by making use of the Internet and its characteristics, existing Web development tools commercially available, and the information provided by telecommunications vendors including manufacturers, service providers, and system integrators.

Throughout this description the term "user" is used. When a specific class of "user" is mentioned the descriptive characteristic appears in parentheses (*e.g.*, user (vendor)). In all other cases it refers to any individual who comes to the "site." The "site" refers to the current invention and its inherent properties including presence on the Internet. The term "vendor" refers to all entities that subscribe to the invention and populate the invention's database with the information that is used in the other applications. Finally, the term "product" refers not only to product, service, or system solution.

FIG. 1 is snapshot of the input or data entry process where a vendor 102 accesses the site and enters product/service information. In this instance the database 100 may comprise partitions 104 whereby the each vendor has a separate database or portion of a database that houses their product/service information. Access to this partition 104 may be restricted to the vendor 102 and personnel within the site. Access

to this function is provided through the Internet 110 and access to the site at http:\\www.telezoo.com. The vendor 102 then accesses the login area and proceeds to enter their login name and password (cf. FIG. 19)

FIG 2 is a schematic block diagram or process flow of the system and the options that a user can choose from when entering the site at the aforementioned address. Each decision block 202, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222, 224, 226, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, represents a hyperlink or action that the user may take when at the site's home page. When the user chooses a particular function 203, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, the system transfers the user to a separate page and the associated actions and processes. The schematic of FIG. 2 simply presents the options available. In one embodiment, the user is not transferred to the Virtual RFP. If the customer takes no action, the system continues to present the menu page until the user either selects an option or exits the site. Graphical presentation of the format may be accomplished through commercially available software.

FIG. 3 is a process flow describing the Compare function 203. For a user desiring to compare various products and has some existing information/knowledge of the products that are available. At a step 300, when the user selects "Compare Products," the product comparison module, *product comparison.asp*, is invoked.

In a step 302, the user is then presented the first category sheet where they are asked to choose between a product, a service, or system solution. In a step 304, the user selects one of these categories, and is taken to a subsequent page where all the various index categories for that area are presented. Some categories within the index have other sub-categories. In a step 306, if the user selects one of these categories, a similar process is followed at steps 308 and 310. This process (steps 306, 308, 310) continues until the actual business area where products have been indexed has been selected. According to one embodiment, the actual business area may be three levels deep, although fewer or more levels of detail may be provided as well. In each instance selection may be made according to known methods of selecting in a graphical user interface, including via a radio button where upon selection ("clicking") of the button corresponding to an area the subsequent action is executed automatically. In a step 312, the user is presented the listing of all products for this topical area.

In a step 314, the user is then allowed to select a plurality of selections to be compared. In one embodiment, a maximum number of selections may be set by the system, such as four selections. At least two selections are generally required to perform the selection. The user may change their choice and also clear all selections at any time. Each product listed is a respective record within the database 100 indexed by product ID which is ultimately tied to the first 3 categories (product, service, and system solution).

The user may then initiate product comparison, such as through selection of a "Compare Products" button on the user interface. A comparison module is then invoked which retrieves the Product IDs selected by the user to obtain the corresponding template stored in the database 100 for that product. Each product stored in the database 100 may comprise a template stored therewith with a standardized format of information. These templates are unique to the product and represent the chief accomplishment of the invention in a step 316 to create a normalized datasheet where a side by side, like-to-like comparison can be done.

Simultaneously, the comparison module also retrieves the selected records from the database. In a step 318, the information in these records are retrieved and presented within the datasheet via the "Product Description Page" (see FIG. 25).

The user can now choose any of the following actions: return to the previous page and compare four more products, read any news related to the products presented to the user via the "Compare" feature, or purchase the product on-line. The last three actions may be contained within the Product Description Page and is explained later (cf. FIG. 25). At any time the user can leave this function 203 by clicking on any of the functions 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239 with their links presented in the left margin to the user. The user can also return to the home page by clicking on the home hyperlink in the upper right hand corner of the page.

FIG. 4 is a process flow describing the Find function 205. This function is intended for the user who does not have any necessary idea of what is offered in the marketplace, but does know their general requirements. In a step 400, when the user selects "Find Products," the product search module, *prodsearch.asp*, is invoked.

In a step 402, the user is then presented the first category sheet where they are asked to choose between a product, a service, or system solution. The user selects one of these categories, and in a step 404 is taken to a subsequent page in a step 406 where all the various index categories for that area are presented. In a step 408, the user will make their selection. Some categories within the index have other subcategories. If the user selects one of these categories similar process is followed. This process continues until the actual business area where products have been indexed. Again, the process may set a limit on the number of levels that may be chosen, such as a maximum of three levels. In each instance selection may be made through the user interface, such as via a radio button where upon selection ("clicking") of the button corresponding to an area the subsequent action is executed automatically.

At step 410, the user is then presented a split screen where on the left is a list of questions that they can use to assist them in the search and on the right are the search results. The questions presented correspond to predefined categories that vendors complete when performing product entry. According to one embodiment, these predefined categories may be mandatory to perform the search.

In a step 412, the user can select any of these questions. Adjacent to each question is a question mark which the user may click on to bring up a hyperlink pop-up box that explains the purposes. The user selects a question at step 412 and is, in a step 414, provided a set of possible criteria to choose from. The criteria presented correspond to actual specific data that has been entered by the vendors.

Upon selection of a specific criteria, the module performs a query lookup to identify records with the specific Product ID and the fields with data matching the find criteria specified by the user. The results are then posted on the right side of the screen along with the search criteria stated up top.

In a step 416, the user can then choose to refine the search by adding another criteria via the same process. With this action the search may be re-run against the previously qualified products with the new search criteria. The user may continue with this process until the results meet their criteria. At any time the user can opt to perform a new search within the same category by clicking on the "New Search" which cleans all results and query history.

In addition, at a step 418, the user can choose to compare a products that have satisfied the search criteria by clicking "Compare Products" as described above.

At step 420, the "Compare Products" module is then invoked where it retrieves the Product ID and retrieves the selected records from the database 101. In a step 422, the information in these records are retrieved and presented within the datasheet via the "Product Description Page."

The user can now choose any of the following actions: return to the previous page and choose a different category or leave this function by clicking on any of the functions with their links presented in the left margin to the user. The user can also return to the home page by clicking on the home hyperlink in the upper right hand comer of the page.

FIG. 5 is a process flow describing the Find a Degree function 209. This function is intended for the user who does wishes to find a Degree Program related to the telecommunications field. This function uses the product search module, *prodsearch.asp*, with the specific Product ID = "398" for the education/training.

Similar to the product search 205, in a step 500, the user is then presented a split screen where on the left is a list of questions relevant to degree programs - such as geographical location, level of degree, and major. In a step 502, the user can select any of these questions to serve as the basis of their search. All other functions and processes similar to Find Products hold.

FIG. 6 is a process flow describing the Job Board ("Career Center") function 211. With this function 211 the user can search for a job, create a resume, or post a job. The user can search for a job on or off-line.

When the user selects find a job at step 600, the site opens in a step 602 a session with a .com job board, such as Monster.com. In a step 602, the functions of the .com job site are displayed as part of this invention. The site incorporates the "Job Search" function which gives access to the .com job search engine with key words of "Engineering/Architecture/Design" and "Information Technology" or through other key words (*e.g.*, "Telecommunications") that the user may enter, and all geographical sites. In a step 604, the user selects their criteria and the results are displayed for the user in a step 606. In this feature the user can clear their criteria and begin a new search.

The Career Center 211 also gives the user the option to enter their specific criteria on-line and subsequently log-off where the search engine will continue the search and deliver potential opportunities to an "In Box" for the user. The Career Center also allows the user to create a resume on-line and immediately respond to a job opening on the .com job site.

Finally, the Career Center 211 will allow users to post job openings that both this site's and the.com job site users will have access to apply for.

FIG. 7 is a process flow describing the Vendor Finance function 213. This function 213 is intended for the user who is interested in learning about the variety of financing options that most major equipment manufacturers offer for their high-end products. In the ideal scenario the user has identified a product and knows the cost of acquiring a product and is now looking at the possible payment options.

This function uses the product search module, *prodsearch.asp*, with the specific Product ID = "399" for the vendor finance plans. In a step 700, the user has selected the category of vendor offering a finance plan. In a step 702, all the vendors with financing plans will be presented with the corresponding URL available via hyperlink, and the company logo. In a step 704, the user chooses a company, and in a step 706, the user is hyperlinked to containing vendor finance information.

As illustrated in FIG. 8, the "Posted Tender" function 215 is a function that will allow users to either post or view posted tenders. For the users who have specifications already documented and want individuals to bid on the opportunity, the user will enter the site and login in a step 800. Once the account ID and password is verified at a step 802 the user may proceed to view posted tenders a steps 804, 806 or decide to post a tender at a step 808. In steps 810, 812, the user enters the name of the bid and the URL of where the requirements may be viewed. It should be noted that such users can also send the tender to the site where it will be posted. In a step 814, the site will confirm that the tender was posted and return the user to the tender page.

This function 215 is also available to the vendors where a registered vendor can login and check the tenders that have been posted. If the tender is located at a separate URL, the vendor can click on the hyperlink and be taken to the tender.

FIGS. 9-12 provide the user with Stock Market and News Information. This site interfaces with a .com stock quote site to obtain information as requested by the invention's user.

Users can obtain stock quote information and create their own portfolio at the site. Upon choosing the stock quote option 217, the module, *getquote.asp*, is invoked. This module opens a session in a step 900 and obtains information from a .com stock quote site. For stock quotes the user can enter obtain up to 10 quotes in one "session" by entering the ticker symbols in a step 902 and clicking on the "Submit" button. In addition, they may specify how they wish for this information to be presented. In a step 904, the user input is read and a link to the .com stock quote site is opened (e.g., *fast.quote.com*) and the information is retrieved and displayed to the customer in a step 906. In steps 908, 910, 912, this module will also allow the user to view their portfolio. In step 914, this module will also allow the user to read market news.

FIG. 10 details the regulation and business news function 219 where a site user can read news stories related to telecommunications law or regulatory matters. In steps 1000, 1002, when the user selects this function 218 the module, *busreg.asp*, and a similar session is opened with a .com stock quote site with the keyword "Telecommunications Law."

FIG. 11 details the press release function 211 where a site user can read news stories related to telecommunications law or regulatory matters. In steps 1100, 1102, when the user selects this function the module, *presrel.asp*, and a similar session is opened with a .com stock quote site with the keyword "Telecommunications PR."

FIG. 12 details the technical news function 223 where a site user can read news stories related to telecommunications law or regulatory matters. In steps 1200, 1202, when the user selects this function the module, *technews.asp*, and a similar session is opened with *.com* stock quote site with the keyword "Telecommunication Stories."

The field of telecommunications is cluttered with acronyms, many with multiple meanings. The Acronyms and Definitions function 225 provides a method where a user can quickly look up a part or entire acronym and it will give the definition.

When the user clicks on "Acronym and Definitions," the module, *acronym.asp*, is invoked. In a step 1300, the user is provided an input window where they can enter the acronym in its entirety or part of it. In a step 1302, the module will take what has

been entered and perform an ID lookup on all acronyms that match the criteria entered beginning from the first character. In a step 1304, the module will take the records that match and display the acronyms and definitions.

FIG. 14 is a process flow describing the Find a Company function 227. This function is intended for the user who wishes to find a telecommunications or networking company related to the telecommunications field. This function uses the product search module, *prodsearch.asp*, with the specific Product ID = "396" for companies.

Similar to the product find function in steps 1400, 1402, 1404, 1406, the user will choose categories that relate to various business areas that may include their interest. Once a category corresponding to the site's product index, in a step 1408, a listing of companies will be displayed. Each company is listed as a hyperlink where if the user, in a step 1410, is to click on the company's name they will be taken in a step 1412 to the companies' URL site.

The site also provides a mechanism where a user can find a research paper on topics related to telecommunications (technologies, solutions, applications, etc.) in 2 steps. Users who choose the "White Paper" function 229 invoke *whitepaper.asp* and in a step 1500 are presented a dialog box and a listing of over 75 categories within the field of telecommunications. If the user know the category they are researching, in a step 1502 they click a radio button. In a step 1504, the module then performs a lookup and retrieves those paper possessing the Category ID that matches what of the user specified.

If the user does not know the topic or cannot find it, in a step 1506, they can enter "key words" where the search engine will perform a match to identify all records where the white paper title contains at least one of the character string(s) entered in the dialog box. In a step 1508, the user then chooses a sub-category.

In step 1510, the module then displays the qualified list of papers in terms of title in the form of a hyperlink, and the company logo. In a step 1512, should the user click on the title, in a step 1514, they are taken to the URL where the paper is located and it is displayed.

For users who want a quick short discourse the site offers the Technical Q&A section 231. As illustrated in FIG. 16, when the user clicks on this feature 231 they are

connected to a bulletin board/news feature where in a step 1600 the user can click on a topic and in a step 1602 read all the messages posted under the topical area. The user is given the option to read the "articles," post a new article, or post a reply to a specific article in the form of a separate email or in the form of a message onto the board.

FIG. 17 illustrates the Banner Ad function 233 where a user at a step 1700 clicks on a banner. In a step 1702, a banner ID is retrieved and the URL address is accessed. In a step 1704, the user is hyperlinked to the URL address of the advertising vendor.

FIGS. 18-19 present two methods of vendor advertisement on the site. Advertisements are placed throughout the site in the form of banners or promotions. Any user seeking more information on the presented items, in a step 1800 can simply click on the banner or promotion. Each banner or promotion it is presented with an ID behind it. The ID references the site and finds matching URL. In a step 1802, this URL is then invoked and user is taken to that address. Referring to FIG. 19, for every action related to product entry, and maintenance including white papers and product news, the user (vendor or school) may require that the user log-in. All system integrators, manufacturers, and universities must register with the site prior to obtaining a user ID and password. Users access the login area by clicking on the associated hyperlink. Upon choosing this action, in a step 1900, users are taken to the Sign-In page.

If the user is new, in a step 1902, they are taken to the sign-up page. In a step 1904, users then enter key information including organization name, physical and email addresses, point of contact, and business areas of interest, and then submit their request.

This request is then sent to the site's main database where it is housed and, in a step 1906, a user ID and password is created. The site then creates a Company ID for any company previously unregistered. This ID will house the email POC for the purposes of sales lead and proposal notification, for the linking of company to product, and for the linking of company ID to any promotion or banner should they wish to advertise or promote their products more actively. In a step 1908, the customer POC is then notified via email with user id (login name) and password.

The registration process is not limited to vendors. Any user who wishes to use the Virtual RFP feature or post a tender must also register. The same processes and functions hold.

For those users already registered, the user accesses the login area in a step 1910 and enters their ID and password. The site will then, in a step 1912, verify the data entered. If the information entered is wrong, then the user will be prompted again to enter their ID and password.

If the log-in attempt is successful then, in a step 1914, the user is taken to their specific Product Area Page. Once in the Product Area Page, the vendor is now able to make changes to their product database (FIG. 20). These changes include: the ability to add new products, white papers, and product news; the ability to edit or make changes to any of the already present products; the ability to delete a product, white papers or product news; and the ability to copy a product for the purposes of rapid population of the product database.

FIG. 20 illustrates the sign-in function 235. As noted in Figure 20, in a step 2000, the vendor is presented with a sign-in page. In a step 2002, the vendor enters a user IDS and password. At step 2004, a check is made to determine whether the ID and password are valid. If not, the vendor is returned to step 2000. After the vendor has entered a valid ID and password, at a step 2006, a standard product input page is presented having data from the vendor's partition (see FIG. 1). If a customer has decided to discontinue a particular product or service or simple no longer wish to market this item they may choose to delete it in a step 2008. If a customer wishes to delete a product they simply click on the radio button corresponding to the product in question, and then click on the "Delete" function. In a step 2010, the site will then ask the user for confirmation prior to proceeding. In a step 2012, a confirmation is made to ensure if the user selects "Yes," in which case, in a step 2014, the site will take the record number, Company ID, and Product ID, and remove all references to this record from the database (both customer partition and entire site). If the user selects "Cancel" the user is taken back to the main Customer Area Page.

In a step 2016, the user may choose to copy a product by clicking on the radio button of the desired product and then by clicking on "Copy." In a step 2018, the site engine will take the Product ID, Company ID, and create a new record with the same

fields as the one selected to be copied. The site will then name this new record "Copy 1 of <product>," where <product> is the name of the selected product.

In a step 2020, if the user has chosen to enter a new product, they click on "Enter New Product/Service." The Company ID is stored and, in a step 2022, the user is then taken through the same category steps in the process of selecting a product or service (see FIG. 21). The site then stores the Product ID, and the Product Name Page is displayed.

In steps 2024, 2026 the user can choose to edit by entering the product name and part number if they choose to.

As illustrated in FIG. 21, if the user has chosen to enter a new product, the site allows the user to choose a category or sub-category in steps 3000, 3002, 3004, 3006. In a step 3008, the site then uses the Product ID to display the product name page at step 3010. In a step 3012, the user enters a name and part number and, in a step 3014, the site retrieves the normalized data sheet that is then presented to the vendor for the purposes of data entry.

Upon completion of data entry, at a step 3016, the user will hit the "Save" button in order to update the record and populate the data fields in a step 3018. At this point the product is still marked as "Incomplete." This means that the product is still not available in the database for the purposes of Product Comparison or Product Find.

To enable a product to be viewed by users the vendor must select in a step 3020 "Complete and Close." At this point, in a step 3022, the database is updated with the new product, and the user is brought back to the main customer page in a step 3024.

FIG. 22 presents the details for when a customer wishes to edit a product or service. As mentioned, to Edit a product, in a step 4000, the customer clicks on the product's or service's corresponding radio button and then chooses "Edit."

In a step 4002, the product or service record is captured, and the customer is taken to a new screen presenting the database record. The user, in a step 4004, will then hit select the "Incomplete" button to temporarily pull the product out of the site's database. In steps 4006, 4008, 4010, 4012, the user then makes the changes by selecting new features or removing existing features by checking those that appear under Specification for each sub-category. To update the record the user, in a step 4014, then clicks on "Save" where, in a step 4016, the corresponding data fields are

updated with the user's changes. To re-insert the product into the database at step 4020 the user, must, in a step 4018, select "Complete and Close."

The changes can include changing a name or part number. In either the product entry mode or edit mode the user can select the "Change Product Name/Part Number." The user will be taken to a separate screen where the existing name and part number are displayed. The user may then make the changes and return to the product's data sheet by hitting the same button.

Similarly, within either the Enter or Edit mode a vendor can enter Product News. The user simply clicks on Add/Edit/Delete News Articles."

The user may add or edit the news by typing in the Title, the URL (Web address), the date for the news article, and then click on "Add New News Article" button, and return to the product screen.

As illustrated in FIGS. 21 and 22, in both modes the user can exit the screen and return to the main customer area by clicking on the "Log-in" button at steps 3026, 3024 and 4022, 4024. In steps 3028 and 4026, when the user has completed making changes they can click on the "Logout" button, from where the user is returned to the homepage at steps 3030 and 4028.

The last major service of the invention is the Virtual Request for Proposal ("Virtual RFP"). The Virtual Request for Proposal function 239 is the first offering of its kind where a registered user can prepare such a request online.

As illustrated in FIG. 23, users select this feature and, in a step 5000, are taken to the first page of the Virtual RFP. In this page users enter the title of the future project, the timeframe, and specifics of their organization with respect to business area, and size.

The first page also includes several questions related to where the customer is requesting such service, the number of network locations, users (network end-points) and applications. This is followed by questions related to specific products or services the user may be requesting. In a step 5002, the customer provides answers to these questions.

The site stores these answers, and upon the user hitting "Next" performs, in a step 5004, a check to see if the user answered all mandatory questions on Page 1. If all questions are answered then, in a step 5006, the user is taken to Page 2. If all

mandatory questions were not answered then the user is returned to Page 1. In steps 5012, 5014 at page 2, the site will only display services if the user had selected services from Page 1, and likewise, at steps 5008, 5010, for products. If the user selected both then both categories are displayed.

When at page 2, the user, at a step 5016, is then asked to select particular products or services. When the user has completed all the questions, the site then prompts the user, at a step 5018, as to whether they wish to proceed in submitting this proposal. If the user hits "Yes" then the RFP is sent to the site for processing. If the user opts not to submit the proposal, then they are taken back to the site's main page.

Upon submittal to the site, in a step 5020, the answers to the RFP are then processed as illustrated in FIG. 24. In a step 6000, specific questions related to applications, products, and services are linked to key words. These key words correspond to the business areas that registered vendors have indicated as areas of interest. In a step 6002, it is determined which companies have interests matching these key words.

This filtering produces a scenario where only those vendors with an interest in the areas the customer as indicated as needing services will receive the RFP. This results in a generation of effective leads for vendors while minimizing the exposure to erroneous leads.

Upon completion of the filtering the site, in a step 6004, proceeds to obtain the Company ID of each company with the specific interest. This ID is then used to retrieve points of contacts and their email address. In a step 6006, the site will then send an urgent email to each POC notifying them of an urgent RFP at the site.

Upon receiving the mail, in a step 6008, the vendors will enter the site and login. Once logged, the vendors are taken to their respective site where they are given the option of retrieving the RFP. This site will display all RFPs that would interest the vendor. Should the vendor desire to read the RFP, in a step 6010, they simply click on the RFP title hyperlink. In a step 6012, the site will then display the RFP for the vendor.

The last feature of the site is the on-line order feature contained within the Product Description Page. When users choose "Compare Products" feature 203, as illustrated in FIG. 25, every template contains 3 functions underneath the name of each

product. In a step 7002, to read news related to a specific product/service they can select "Read News." In a step 7004, to view the vendor's product literature, users select the "Product Description" feature. For users wishing to purchase a product, in a step 7006, they select "Order On-Line."

This last feature is the electronic commerce portion of the site. Initially, all orders will be processed in a similar manner to that of the vendor notification. When the user selects this feature, in a step 7010, the site grabs the Product ID, and Company ID and stores the information.

Simultaneously, in a step 7008, the user is presented with an order form where specific questions are answered. When the user has submitted the request, in a step 7012, the Company ID is used to retrieve the company POC email and, in a step 7014, an email is sent to the POC notifying them of an on-line order. In the future, all items under $10,000 will be sold directly over the Internet via electronic commerce and secure credit card transaction. In instances where the amount of the purchase exceeds this limit the previous method of notification will hold.

Accordingly, the present invention provides the following improvements to existing systems: The creation of an Internet site solely dedicated to the field of telecommunications. This is the first telecommunications portal. The creation of a normalized product data sheet for every single telecommunications product and service. This sheet has been developed in conjunction with the attempt to standardized terminology across all vendor product lines and services.

The creation of a product comparison feature that is independent of vendor preference, proprietary features, or price determination.

The creation of a new marketing channel for product manufacturers and service providers through the use of banner advertisements, promotional areas and greater product awareness through functions listed above.

The creation of a sales channel where manufacturers have strict control over what items can be sold thereby ensuring against scenarios where products no longer supported are sold as had been the case with re-seller channels via a vendor database.

The creation of a more precise lead generator where products are actually sold and those exceeding a set funding amount are immediately sent to the vendor for the purposes of business transaction.

The creation of the first site where users can find a qualified college degree of any level (B.S., M.S., Ph.D.) that is related to the field of telecommunications.

The creation of a site where vendors and users can find system integrators that meet their requirements.

The creation of a site where users can find a "system solution" where specific approaches have been documented as best practices within the industry.

The implementation of a Career Center dedicated to the field of telecommunications where users can search for possible job openings, apply for job openings, and post job openings.

The provisioning of a news service covering all aspects of telecommunications including business, technology, and regulation.

The provision of a stock quote service including the ability to create an on-line portfolio. Thereby giving customers a customized look and feel.

The creation of the first site where users can view every manufacturers financing plans for their product line.

The creation of a learning center where users can retrieve research papers, post questions to experts and look up industry acronyms and definitions.

The creation of the first proposal and bid process for telecommunications where the site allows users to create a proposal.

The creation of an active filtering tool to be used in conjunction with the proposal process described above to provide the opportunity to only those who are interested in the related opportunities thereby further eliminating the scenario of bad leads.

The creation of a service where vendors can view other posted tenders or offers and subsequently bid on the required tender.

The creation of a service where a user can find any company and be taken to their World Wide Web page for closer examination.

While this invention has been described in the manner that is the preferred embodiment, it is understood that the invention is not limited to what is disclosed. On the contrary, it is intended to cover what is the spirit and scope of the claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An interactive method of comparing vendor items over an Internet-based web site, comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of categories corresponding to vendor items;

receiving from the user a selection of one of the categories;

presenting to the user a list of vendor items corresponding to the selected one category;

receiving from the user a selection of which of the plurality of listed vendor items the user desires to be compared to each other; and

presenting to the user a comparison of information on each of the selected vendor items.

2. The method of claim 1, said presenting to the user a plurality of categories corresponding to vendor items including presenting to the user a plurality of categories corresponding to vendor products.

3. The method of claim 1, said presenting to the user a plurality of categories corresponding to vendor items including presenting to the user a plurality of categories corresponding to vendor services.

4. The method of claim 1, said presenting to the user a plurality of categories corresponding to vendor items including presenting to the user at least one of a category of vendor products and a category of vendor services, said receiving from the user the selection of one of the categories including receiving a selection of at least one of the category of vendor products and the category of vendor services.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

presenting to the user a plurality of sub-categories within the selected category; and

receiving from the user a selection of one of the sub-categories, said presenting to the user the list of vendor items including presenting a list of vendor items within the selected sub-category, said receiving from the user a selection of which of the plurality of listed vendor items the user desires to be compared to each other including receiving from the user a selection of which of a plurality of listed vendor items within the selected sub-category the

user desires to be compared to each other, said presenting including presenting for comparison by the user a comparison of information on each of the selected vendor items within the selected sub-category.

6. The method of claim 1, said receiving from the user a selection of which of the plurality of listed items the user desires to be compared to each other including receiving from the user a selection of at least two of the plurality of listed items the user desires to be compared to each other.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

retrieving from a database a template for each of the selected vendor items the user desires to be compared to each other, each of the templates having a same standardized format and each containing different information, said presenting for comparison including presenting the templates for each of the selected vendor items.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising presenting to the user an option to view at least one of news on at least one of the selected vendor items and a product description on at least one of the selected vendor items.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising presenting to the user an option to order at least one of the selected vendor items.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising receiving from the user a selection of which of the selected vendor items the user desires to order.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising forwarding an order to a vendor for the selected vendor item the user desires to order.

12. The method of claim 1, said presenting to the user the plurality of categories including presenting to the user at least one category corresponding to vendor services and at least one category corresponding to vendor products.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising presenting to the user a list of questions that each correspond to vendor categories.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising receiving from the user a selection of one of the questions.

15. The method of claim 14. further comprising:

in response to the user selecting one of the questions. presenting to the user criteria for selection by the user: and

receiving from the user a selection of one of the criteria. said presenting to the user the list of vendor items including presenting to the user a list of vendor items that satisfy the criteria selected by the user.

16. The method of claim 1. further comprising:

presenting to a vendor a sign-in page;

receiving from the vendor a password.; and

receiving changes to a vendor item database..

17. The method of claim 16. said receiving changes to the vendor item data base including at least one of:

adding new products or services;

changing information on existing products or services: and

deleting products or services.

18. The method of claim 1. said presenting to the user a comparison of information including presenting to the user a side-by-side comparison of information on each of the selected vendor items.

19. A method of matching vendors with users desiring a service or product via an Internet-based website. comprising:

presenting a user a plurality of questions concerning at least one of a desired type of service and a desired type of product;

receiving from the user answers to the plurality of questions;

receiving an indication of an area of interest from a plurality of vendors: and

determining from the answered questions whether at least one of the vendors has an area of interest that matches at least one of the desired type of service and the desired type of product.

20. The method of claim 19. further comprising:

providing a request for a proposal for at least one of the desired type of service and the desired type of product to the at least one vendor having an area of interest that matches the at least one of the desired type of service and the desired type of product.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising at least one of the vendors logging-in to the website, said providing including presenting the request for a proposal to the at least one vendor after the vendor logs-in to the website.

22. The method of claim 19, said request for a proposal being provided to a plurality of the vendors each having an area of interest that matches the at least one of the desired type of service and the desired type of product.

23. The method of claim 19, said presenting the user a plurality of questions including presenting questions concerning the desired type of service.

24. The method of claim 19, said presenting the user a plurality of questions including presenting questions concerning the desired type of product.

25. The method of claim 19, said presenting the user a plurality of questions including presenting questions concerning the desired type of product and concerning the desired type of service.

26. The method of claim 19, further comprising again presenting the user at least one of the plurality of questions if the user does not answer all of the plurality of questions.

27. The method of claim 19, further comprising determining whether the user has selected at least one of a products category and a services category.

28. The method of claim 19, further comprising creating a request for a proposal based on the answered questions and storing the request for a proposal in a database.

29. The method of claim 19, said determining from the answered questions whether at least one of the vendors has an area of interest that matches at least one of the desired type of service and the desired type of product including linking the answered questions to keywords and determining whether the keywords correspond to at least one of the areas of interest from the plurality of vendors.

30. The method of claim 19, if it is determined from the answered questions that at least one of the vendors has an area of interest that matches at least one of the desired type of service and the desired type of product, then providing a notification to at least one of the vendors.

31. The method of claim 30, said providing a notification including sending an email to the at least one vendor.

32. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

presenting a log-in page to at least one of the plurality of vendors: and

presenting to the at least one vendor a request for a proposal based on the answered questions.

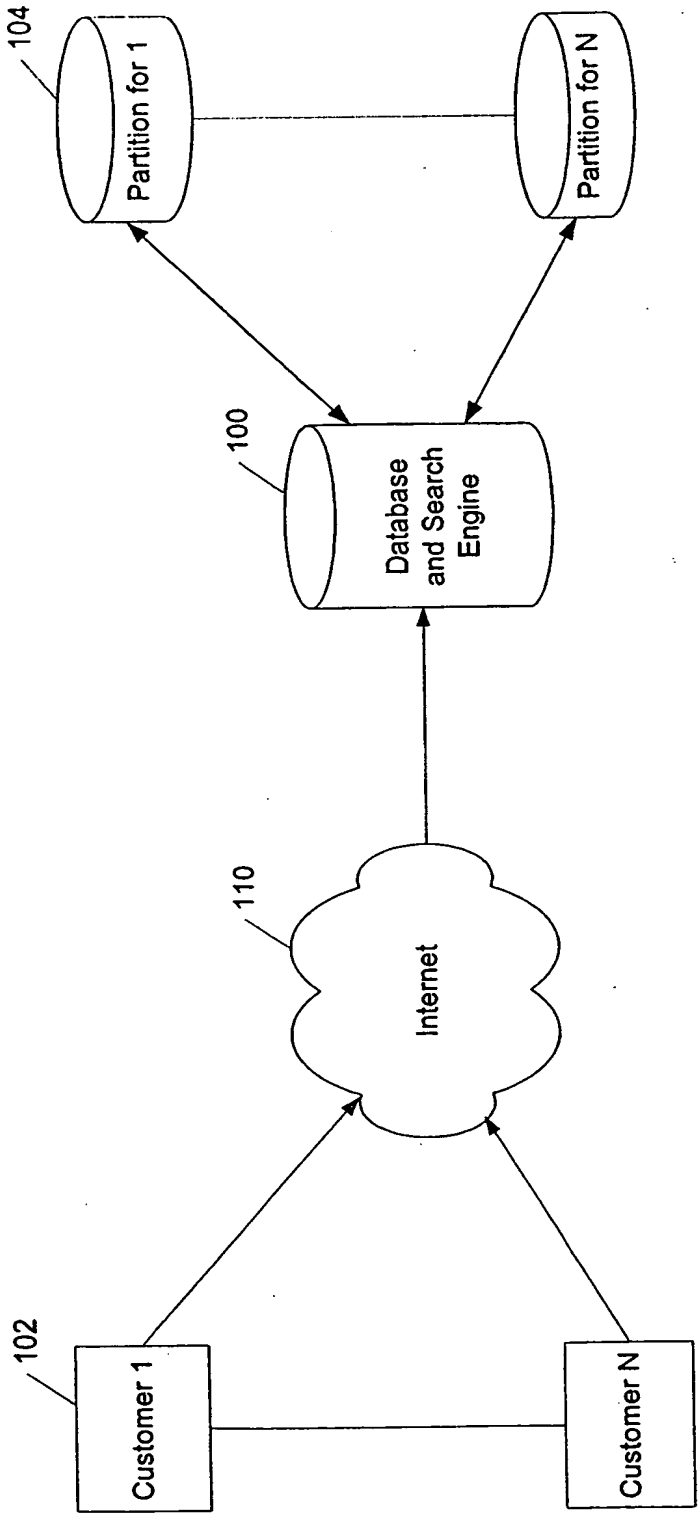
104
Partition for 1
Partition for N
100
Database and Search Engine
110
Internet
102
Customer 1
Customer N

Fig. 1

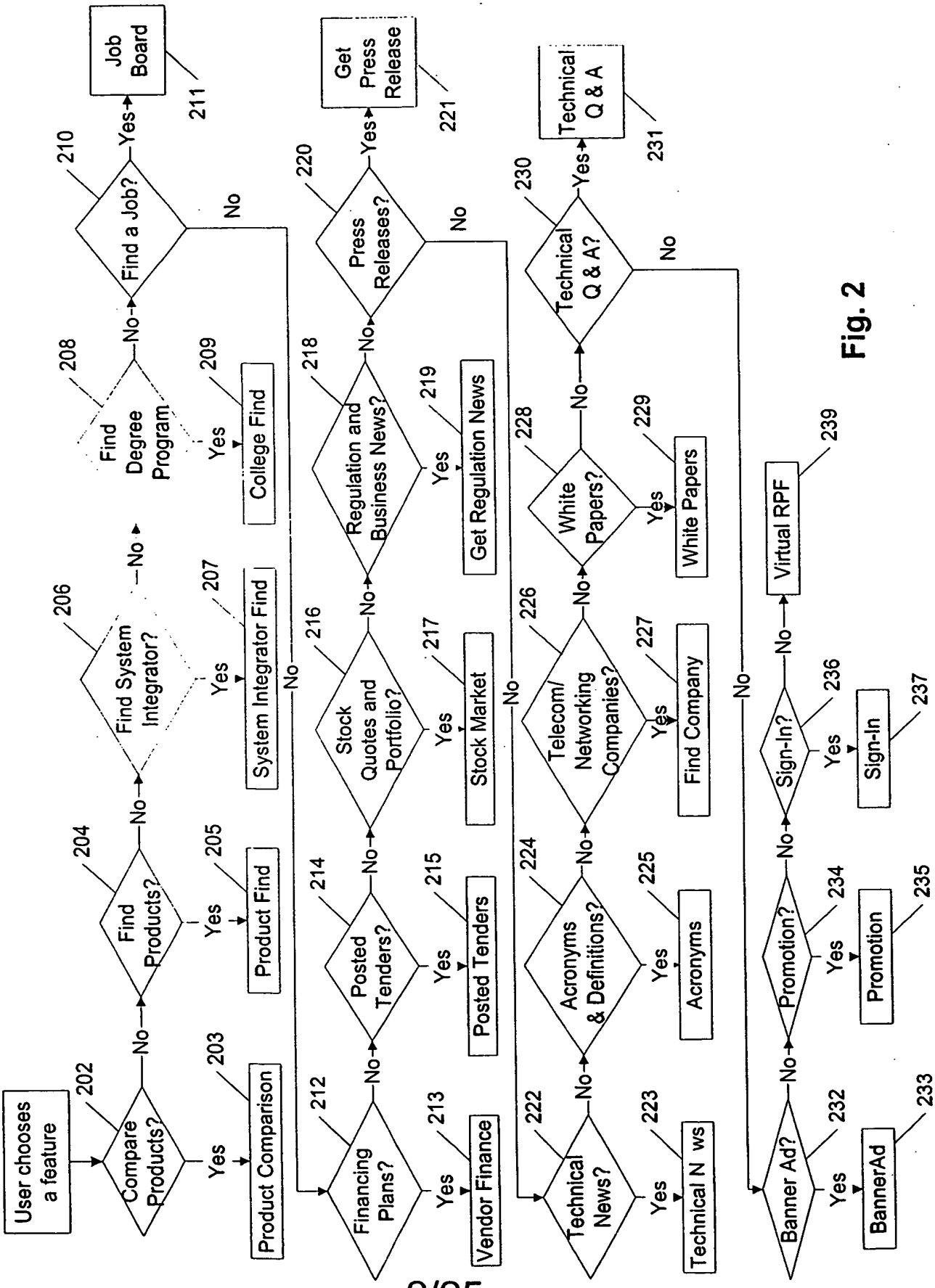
User chooses a feature
Compare Products?
Yes
Product Comparison
No
Find Products?
Yes
Product Find
No
Find System Integrator?
Yes
System Integrator Find
No
Find Degree Program
Yes
College Find
No
Find a Job?
Yes
Job Board
No
Financing Plans?
Yes
Vendor Finance
No
Posted Tenders?
Yes
Posted Tenders
No
Stock Quotes and Portfolio?
Yes
Stock Market
No
Regulation and Business News?
Yes
Get Regulation News
No
Press Releases?
Yes
Get Press Release
No
Technical News?
Yes
Technical N ws
No
Acronyms & Definitions?
Yes
Acronyms
No
Telecom/ Networking Companies?
Yes
Find Company
No
White Papers?
Yes
White Papers
No
Technical Q & A?
Yes
Technical Q & A
No
Banner Ad?
Yes
BannerAd
No
Promotion?
Yes
Promotion
No
Sign-In?
Yes
Sign-In
No
Virtual RPF
202
203
204
205
206
207
208
209
210
211
212
213
214
215
216
217
218
219
220
221
222
223
224
225
226
227
228
229
230
231
232
233
234
235
236
237
239

Fig. 2

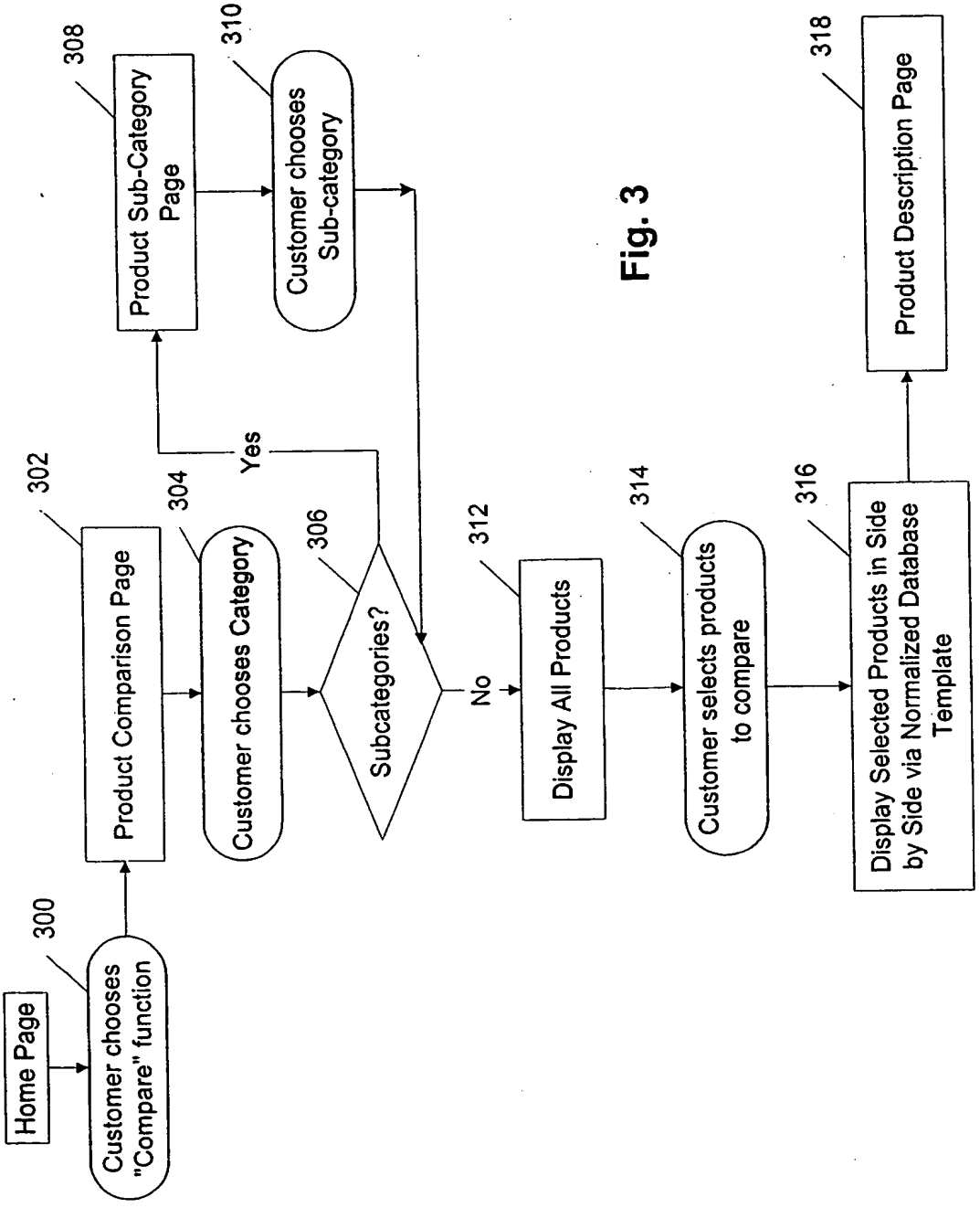
Home Page
Customer chooses "Compare" function
300
Product Comparison Page
302
Customer chooses Category
304
Subcategories?
306
Yes
No
Product Sub-Category Page
308
Customer chooses Sub-category
310
Display All Products
312
Customer selects products to compare
314
Display Selected Products in Side by Side via Normalized Database Template
316
Product Description Page
318

Fig. 3

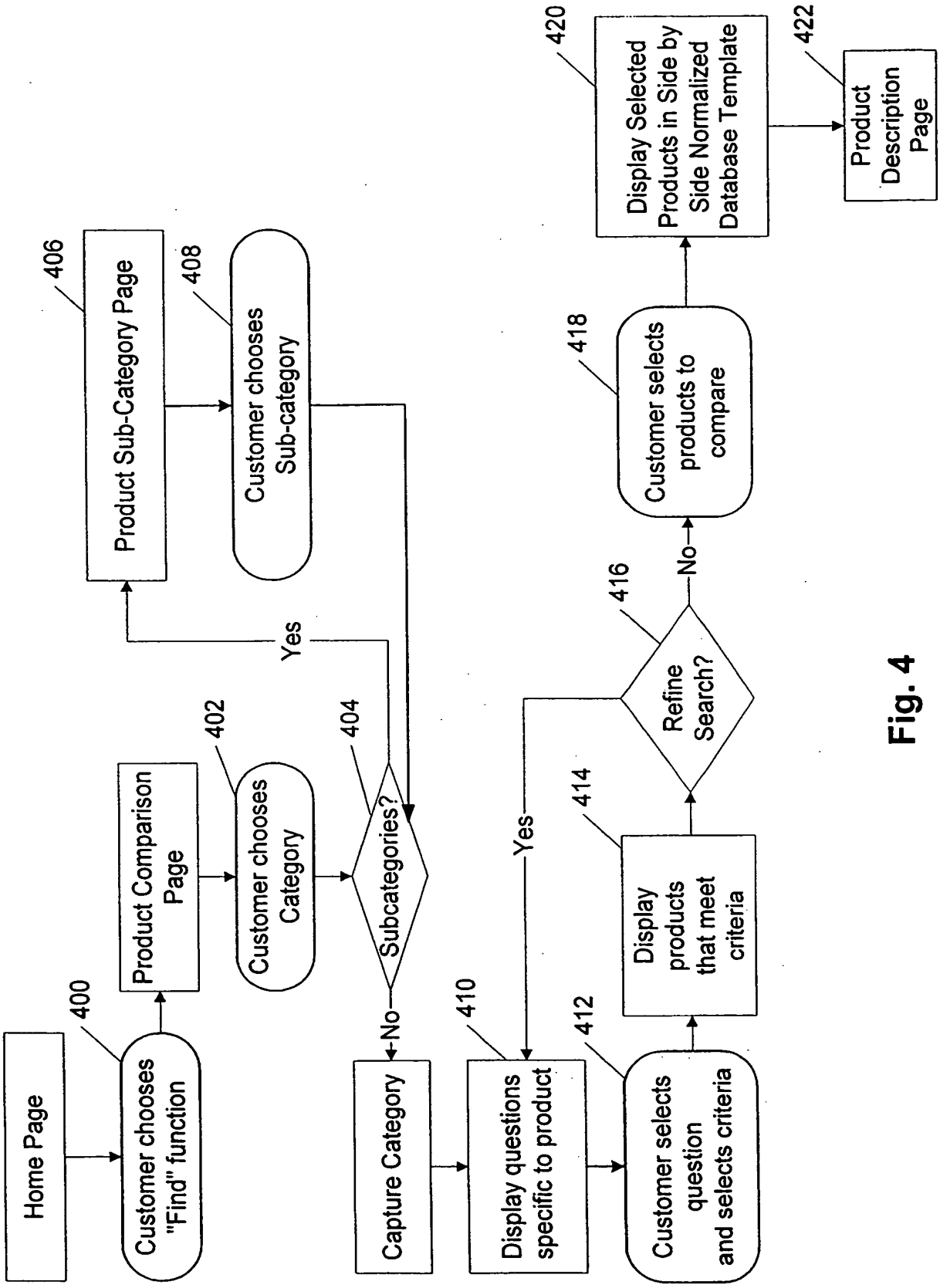
Home Page
400
Customer chooses "Find" function
Product Comparison Page
402
Customer chooses Category
404
Subcategories?
Yes
406
Product Sub-Category Page
408
Customer chooses Sub-category
No
Capture Category
410
Display questions specific to product
412
Customer selects question and selects criteria
Display products that meet criteria
414
Refine Search?
416
Yes
No
Customer selects products to compare
418
Display Selected Products in Side by Side Normalized Database Template
420
Product Description Page
422

Fig. 4

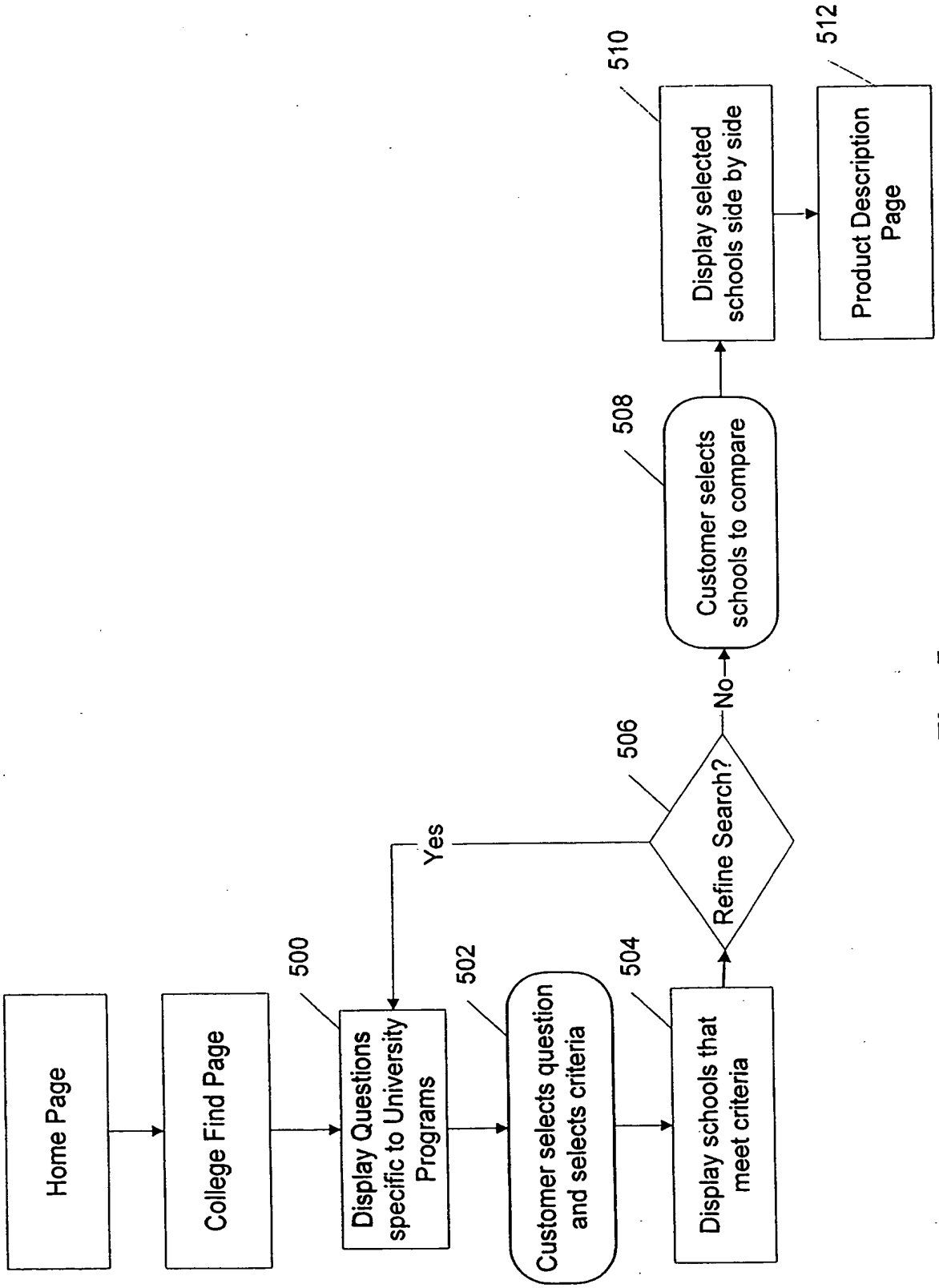
Home Page
College Find Page
Display Questions specific to University Programs
Customer selects question and selects criteria
Display schools that meet criteria
Refine Search?
Yes
No
Customer selects schools to compare
Display selected schools side by side
Product Description Page
500
502
504
506
508
510
512

Fig. 5

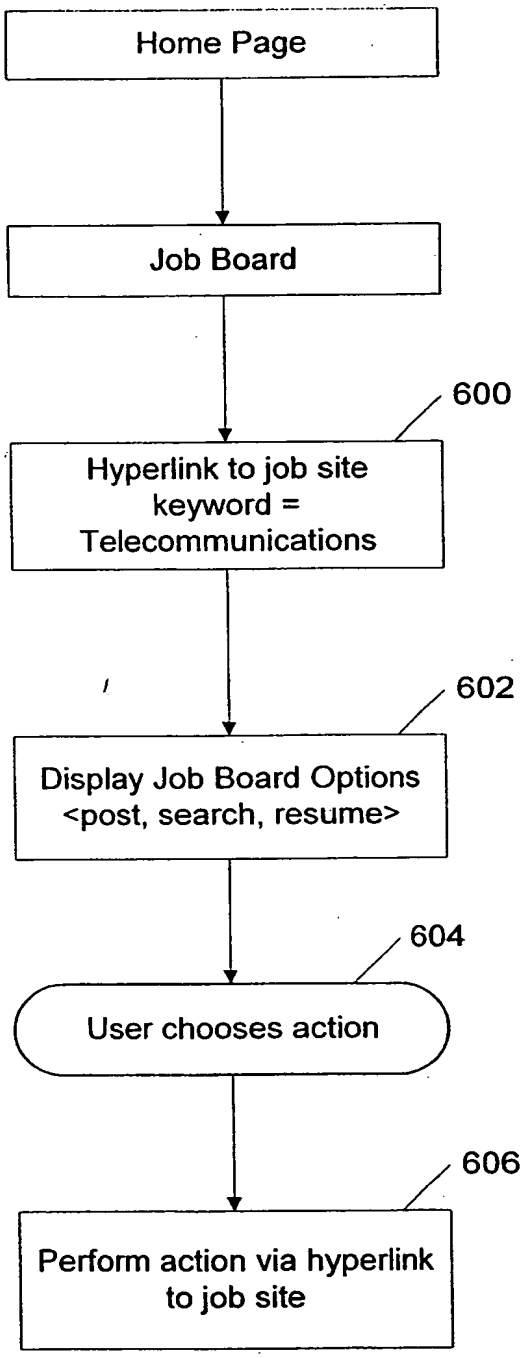
Home Page
Job Board
600
Hyperlink to job site
keyword =
Telecommunications
602
Display Job Board Options
<post, search, resume>
604
User chooses action
606
Perform action via hyperlink
to job site

Fig. 6

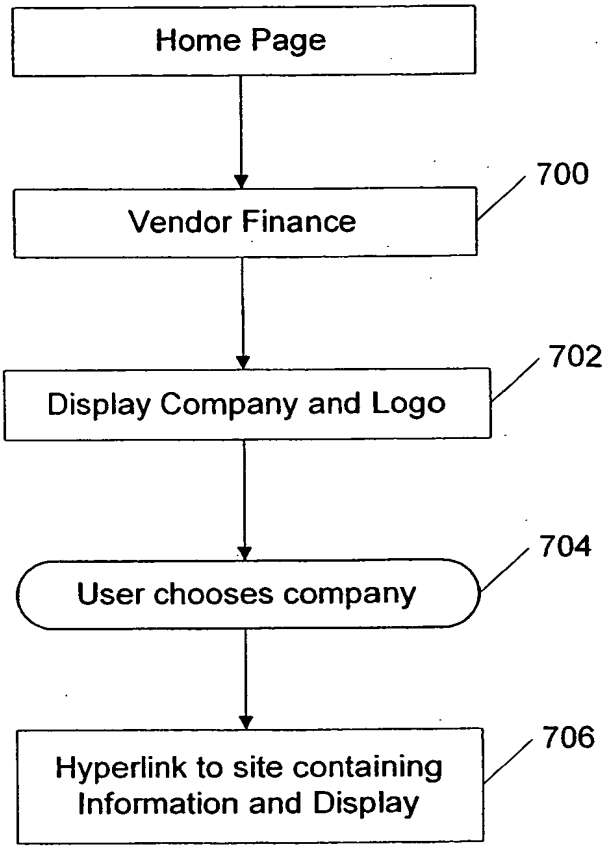
Home Page
Vendor Finance
700
Display Company and Logo
702
User chooses company
704
Hyperlink to site containing Information and Display
706

Fig. 7

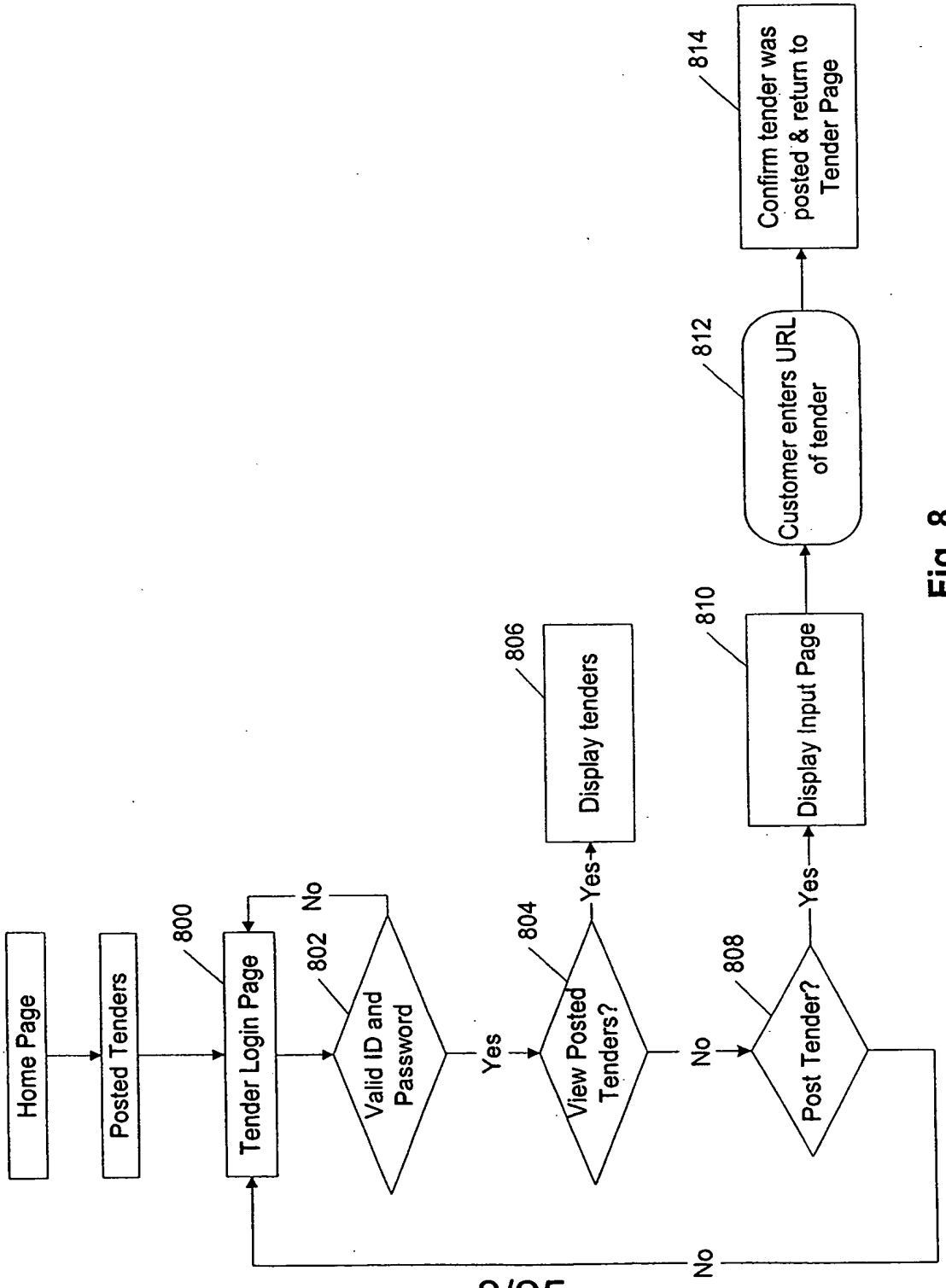
Home Page
Posted Tenders
800
Tender Login Page
802
Valid ID and Password
No
Yes
804
View Posted Tenders?
Yes
806
Display tenders
No
808
Post Tender?
Yes
810
Display Input Page
812
Customer enters URL of tender
814
Confirm tender was posted & return to Tender Page
No

Fig. 8

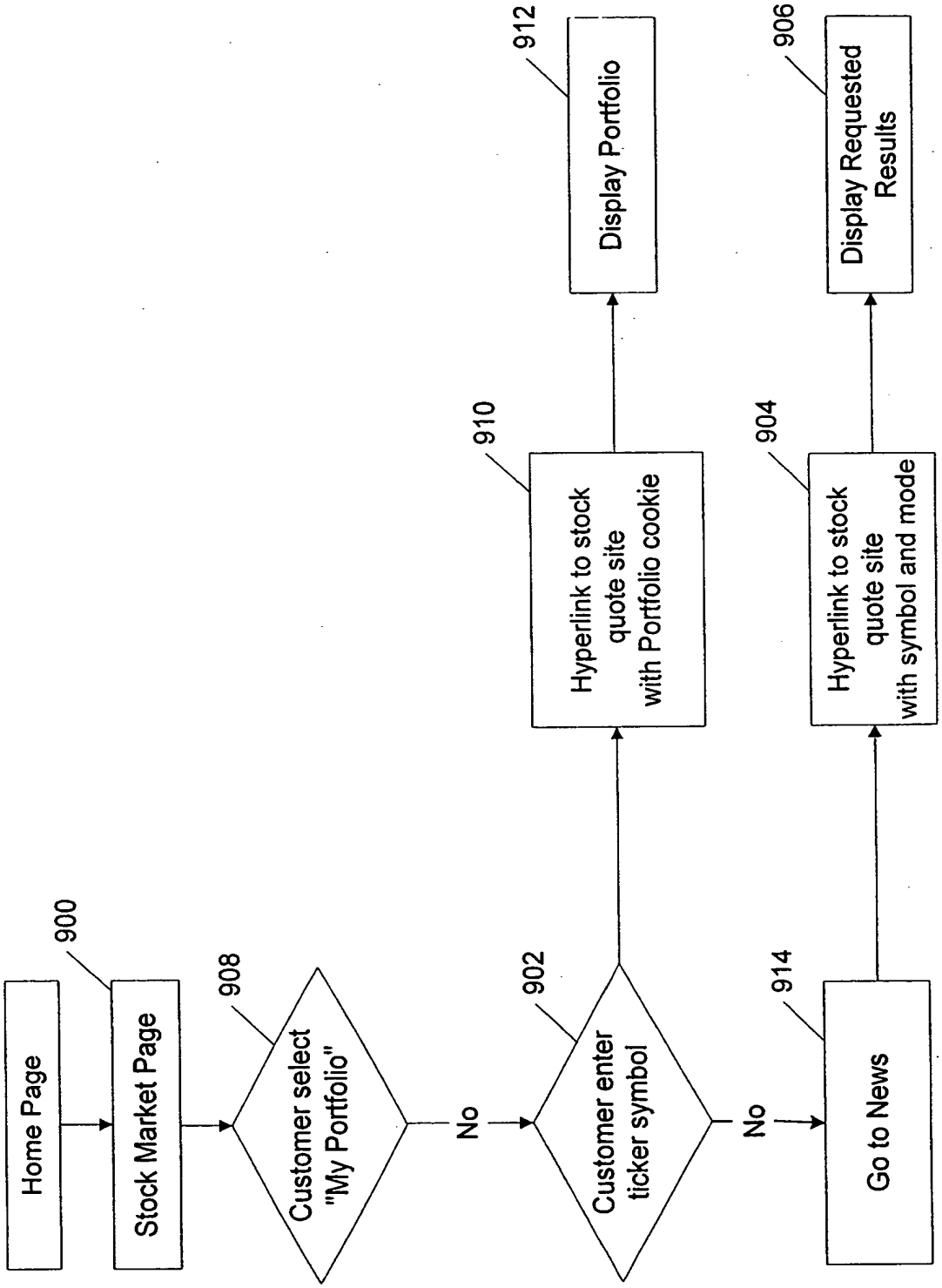
Home Page
900
Stock Market Page
908
Customer select "My Portfolio"
No
902
Customer enter ticker symbol
No
914
Go to News
910
Hyperlink to stock quote site with Portfolio cookie
912
Display Portfolio
904
Hyperlink to stock quote site with symbol and mode
906
Display Requested Results

Fig. 9

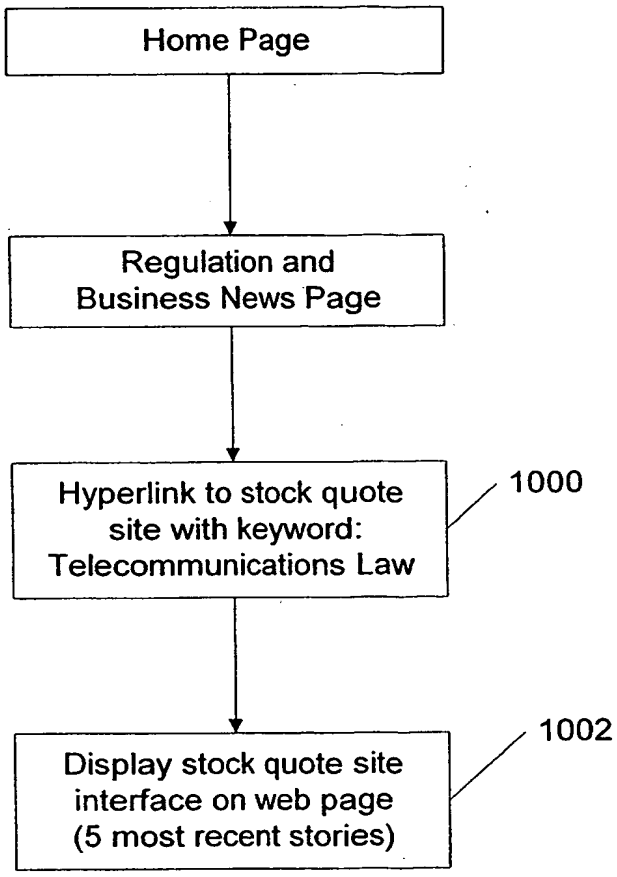
Home Page
Regulation and Business News Page
Hyperlink to stock quote site with keyword: Telecommunications Law
1000
Display stock quote site interface on web page (5 most recent stories)
1002

Fig. 10

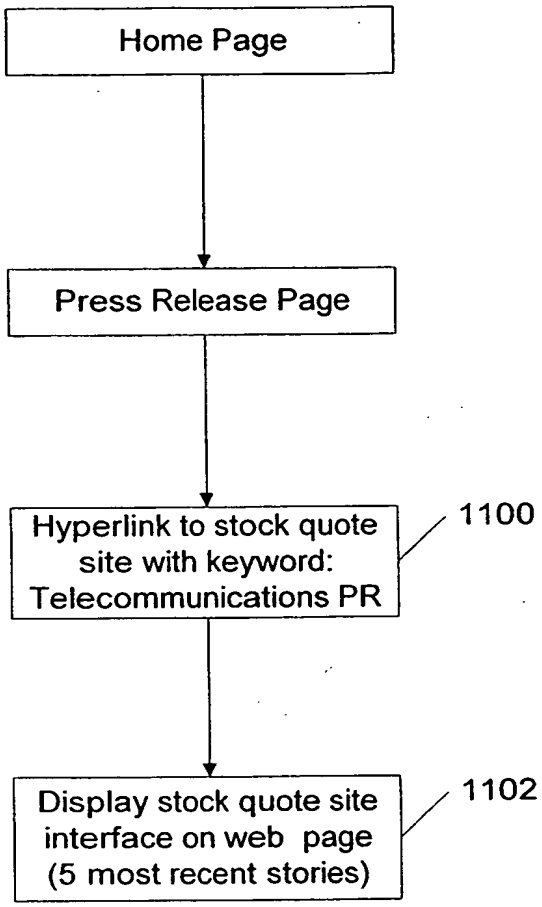
Home Page
Press Release Page
Hyperlink to stock quote site with keyword: Telecommunications PR
1100
Display stock quote site interface on web page (5 most recent stories)
1102

Fig. 11

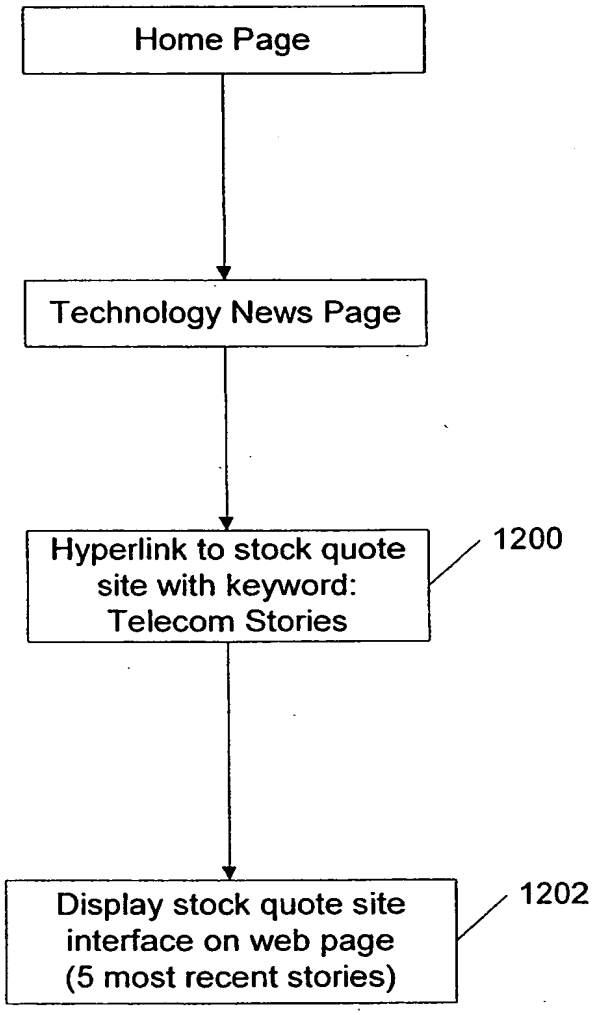
Home Page
Technology News Page
Hyperlink to stock quote site with keyword: Telecom Stories
1200
Display stock quote site interface on web page (5 most recent stories)
1202

Fig. 12

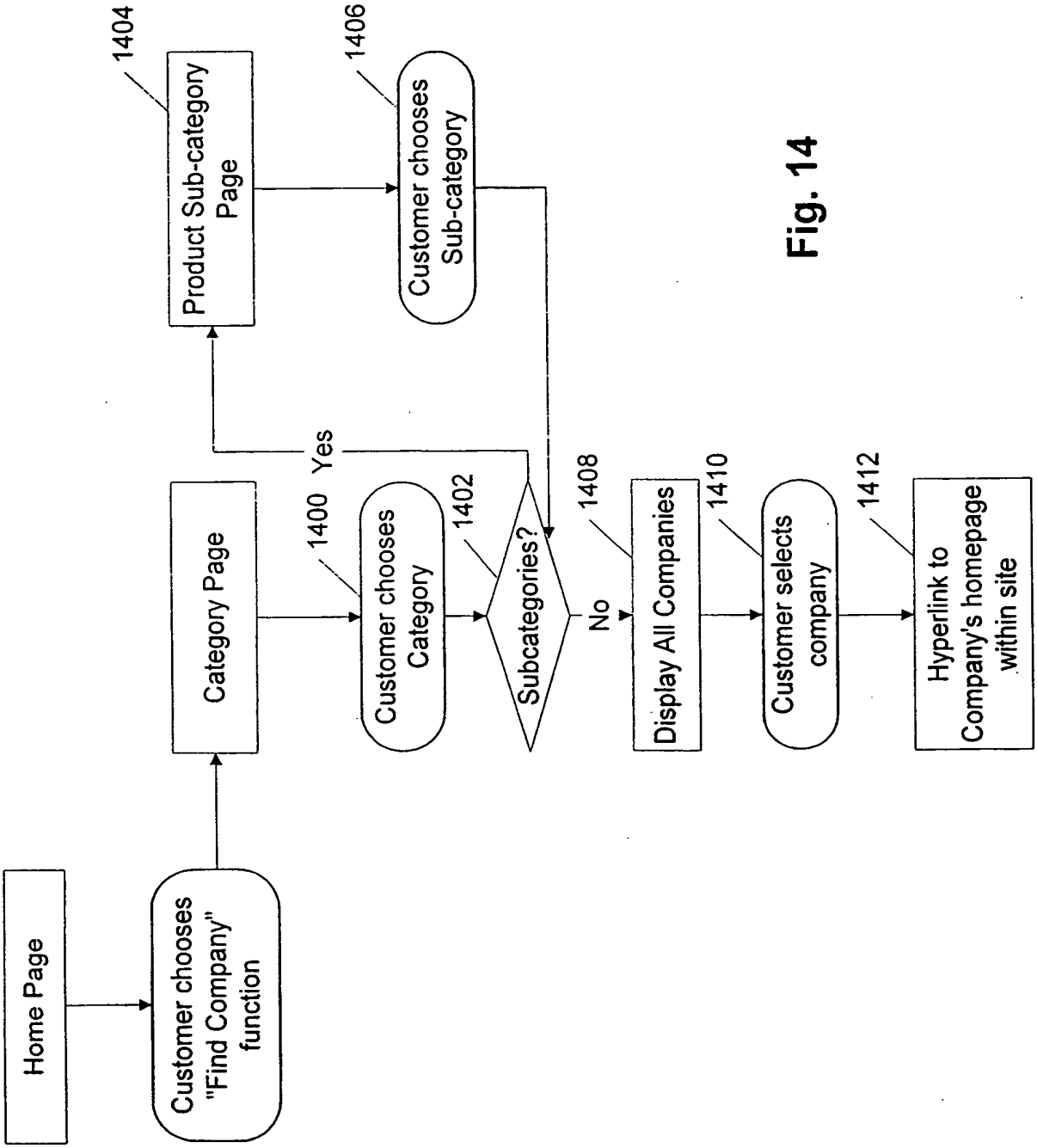
Home Page
Customer chooses "Find Company" function
Category Page
Customer chooses Category
1400
Subcategories?
1402
Yes
No
Product Sub-category Page
1404
Customer chooses Sub-category
1406
Display All Companies
1408
Customer selects company
1410
Hyperlink to Company's homepage within site
1412

Fig. 14

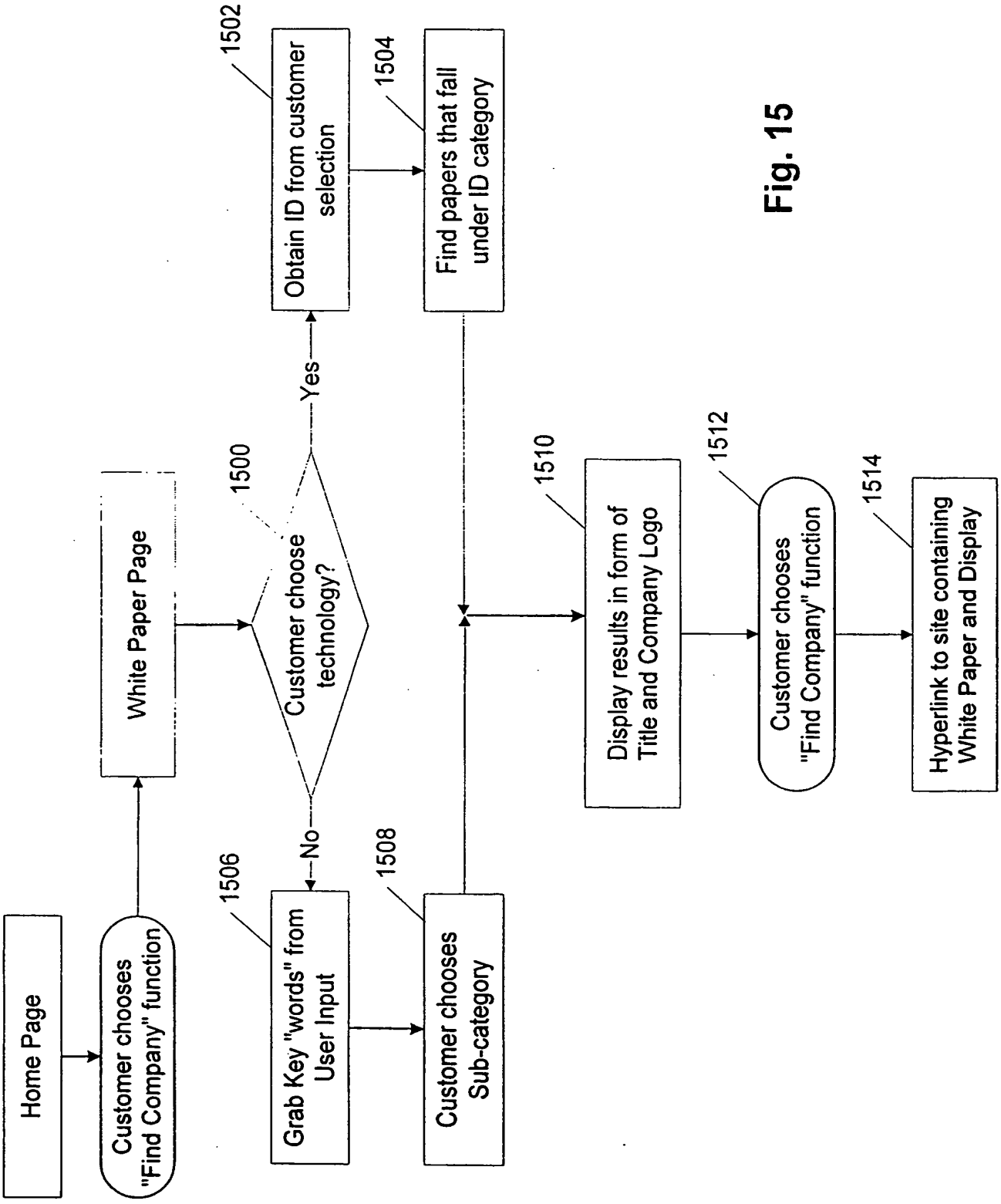
Home Page
Customer chooses "Find Company" function
White Paper Page
1500
Customer choose technology?
Yes
No
1502
Obtain ID from customer selection
1504
Find papers that fall under ID category
1506
Grab Key "words" from User Input
1508
Customer chooses Sub-category
1510
Display results in form of Title and Company Logo
1512
Customer chooses "Find Company" function
1514
Hyperlink to site containing White Paper and Display

Fig. 15

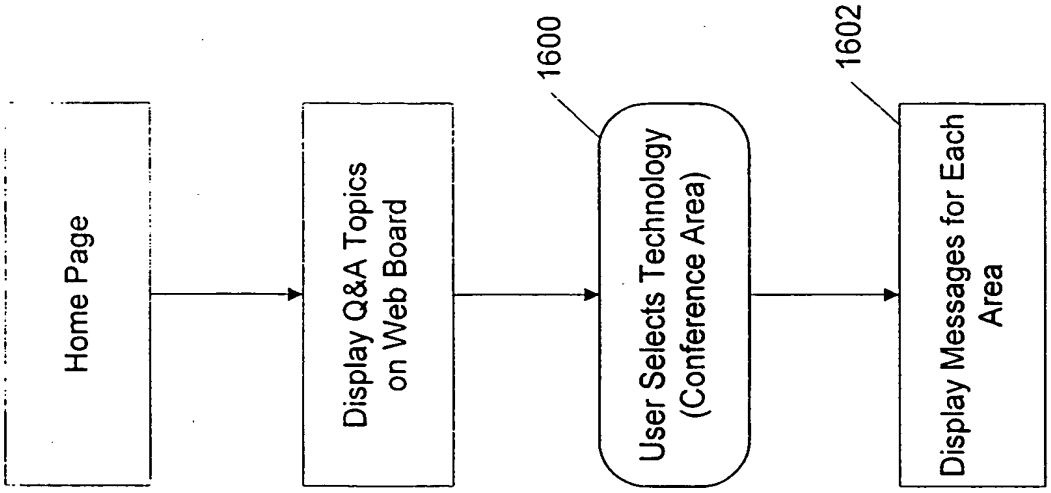
Home Page
Display Q&A Topics on Web Board
1600
User Selects Technology (Conference Area)
1602
Display Messages for Each Area

Fig. 16

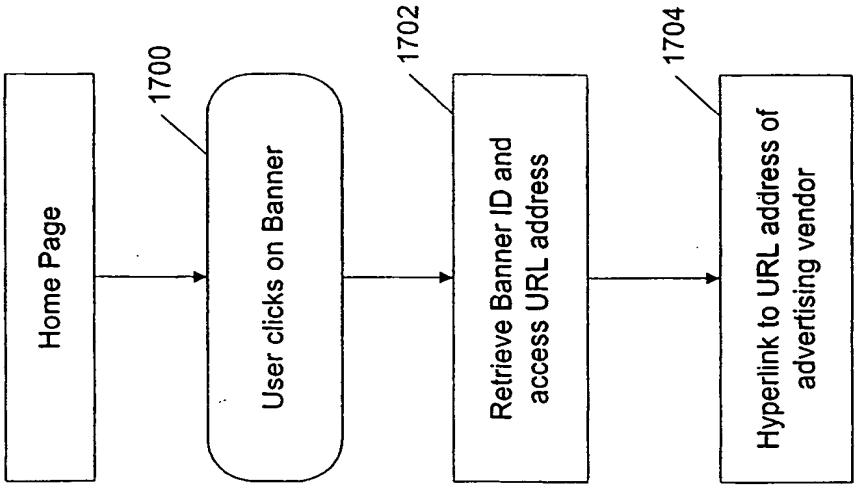
Home Page
1700
User clicks on Banner
1702
Retrieve Banner ID and access URL address
1704
Hyperlink to URL address of advertising vendor

Fig. 17

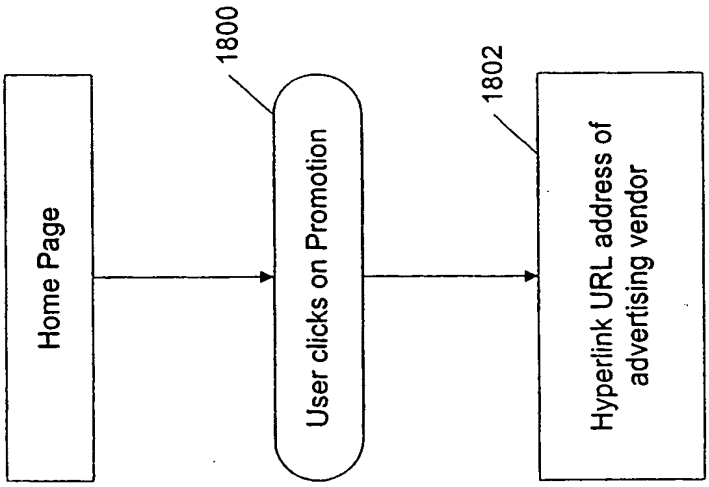
1800
1802
Home Page
User clicks on Promotion
Hyperlink URL address of advertising vendor

Fig. 18

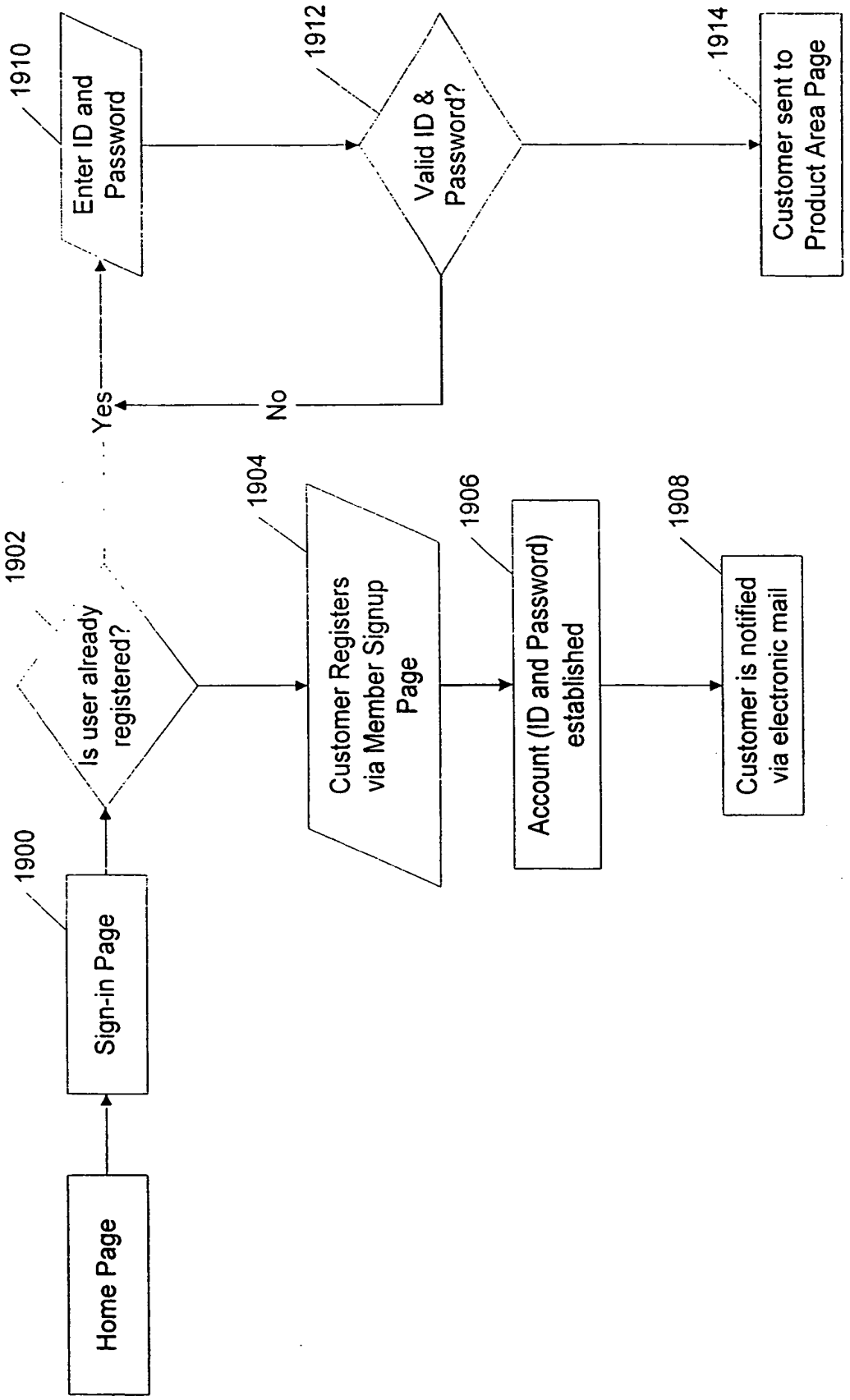
Home Page
1900
Sign-in Page
1902
Is user already registered?
1904
Customer Registers via Member Signup Page
1906
Account (ID and Password) established
1908
Customer is notified via electronic mail
Yes
No
1910
Enter ID and Password
1912
Valid ID & Password?
1914
Customer sent to Product Area Page

Fig. 19

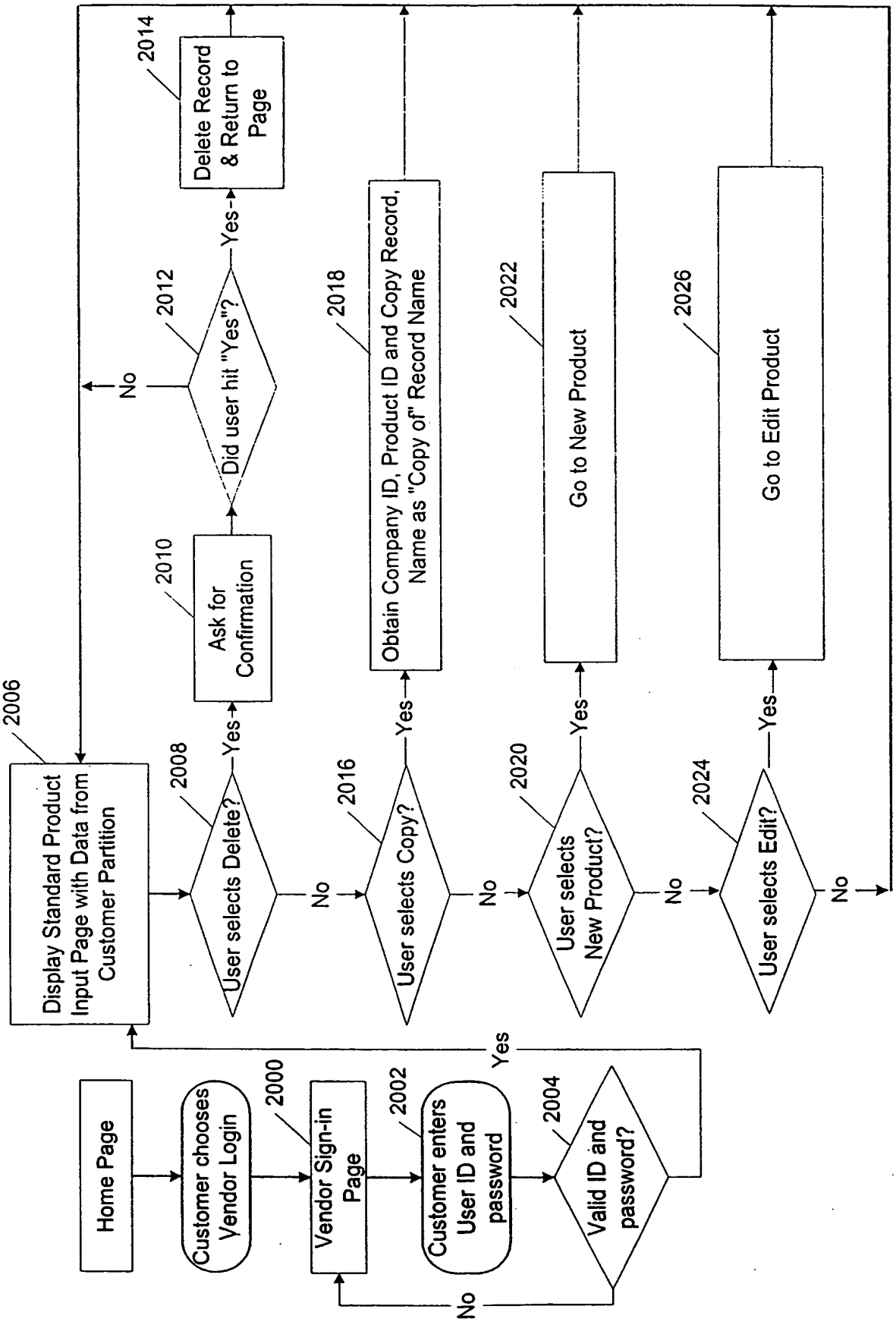
Home Page
Customer chooses Vendor Login
2000
Vendor Sign-in Page
2002
Customer enters User ID and password
2004
Valid ID and password?
No
Yes
Display Standard Product Input Page with Data from Customer Partition
2006
User selects Delete?
2008
Yes
No
Ask for Confirmation
2010
Did user hit "Yes"?
2012
No
Yes
Delete Record & Return to Page
2014
User selects Copy?
2016
Yes
No
Obtain Company ID, Product ID and Copy Record, Name as "Copy of" Record Name
2018
User selects New Product?
2020
Yes
No
Go to New Product
2022
User selects Edit?
2024
Yes
No
Go to Edit Product
2026

Fig. 20

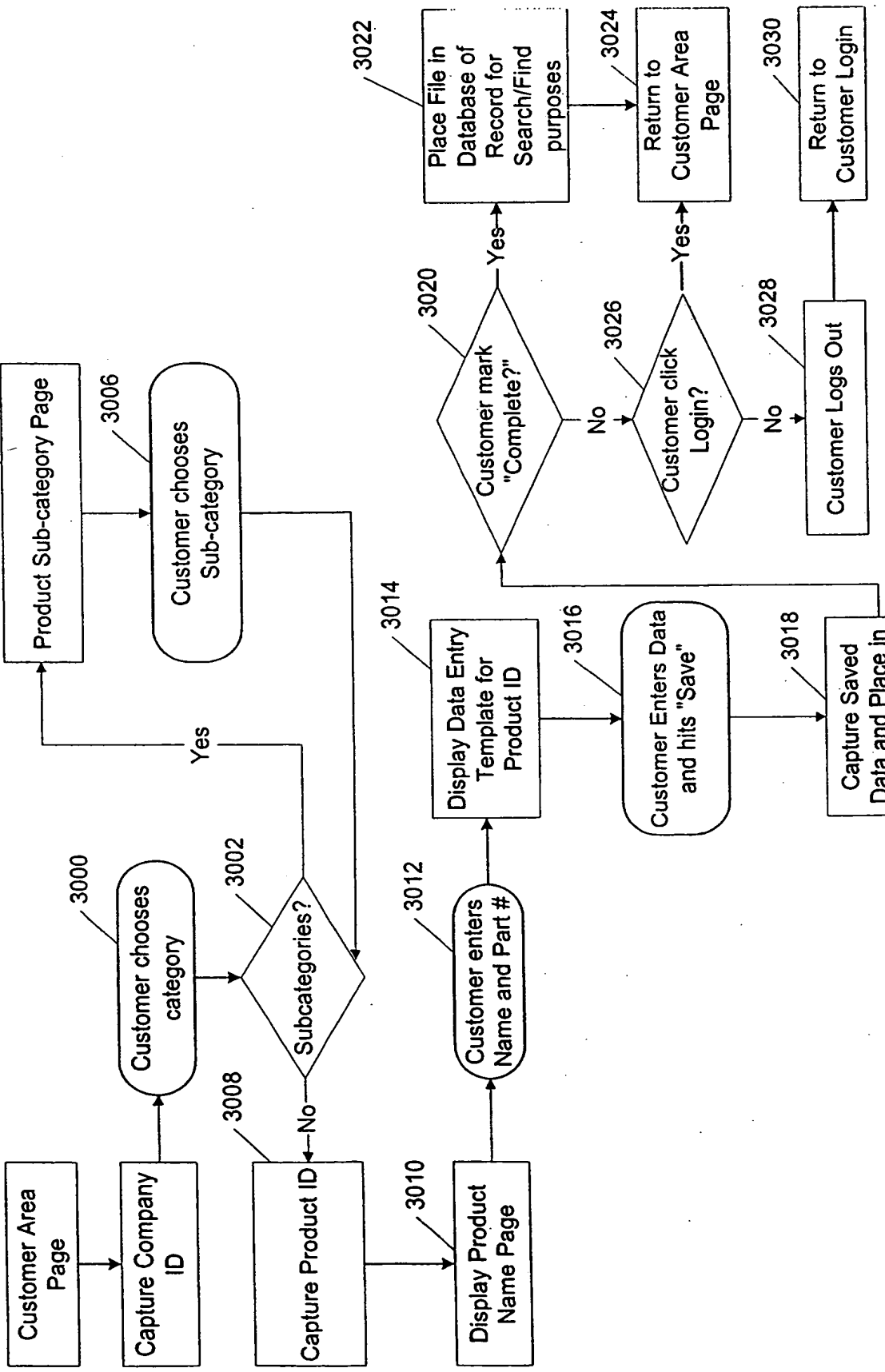
Customer Area Page
Capture Company ID
Customer chooses category
Customer chooses Sub-category
Product Sub-category Page
Subcategories?
Yes
No
Capture Product ID
Display Product Name Page
Customer enters Name and Part #
Display Data Entry Template for Product ID
Customer Enters Data and hits "Save"
Capture Saved Data and Place in Fields of Record
Customer mark "Complete?"
Yes
No
Customer click Login?
Yes
No
Customer Logs Out
Place File in Database of Record for Search/Find purposes
Return to Customer Area Page
Return to Customer Login
3000
3002
3004
3006
3008
3010
3012
3014
3016
3018
3020
3022
3024
3026
3028
3030

Fig. 21

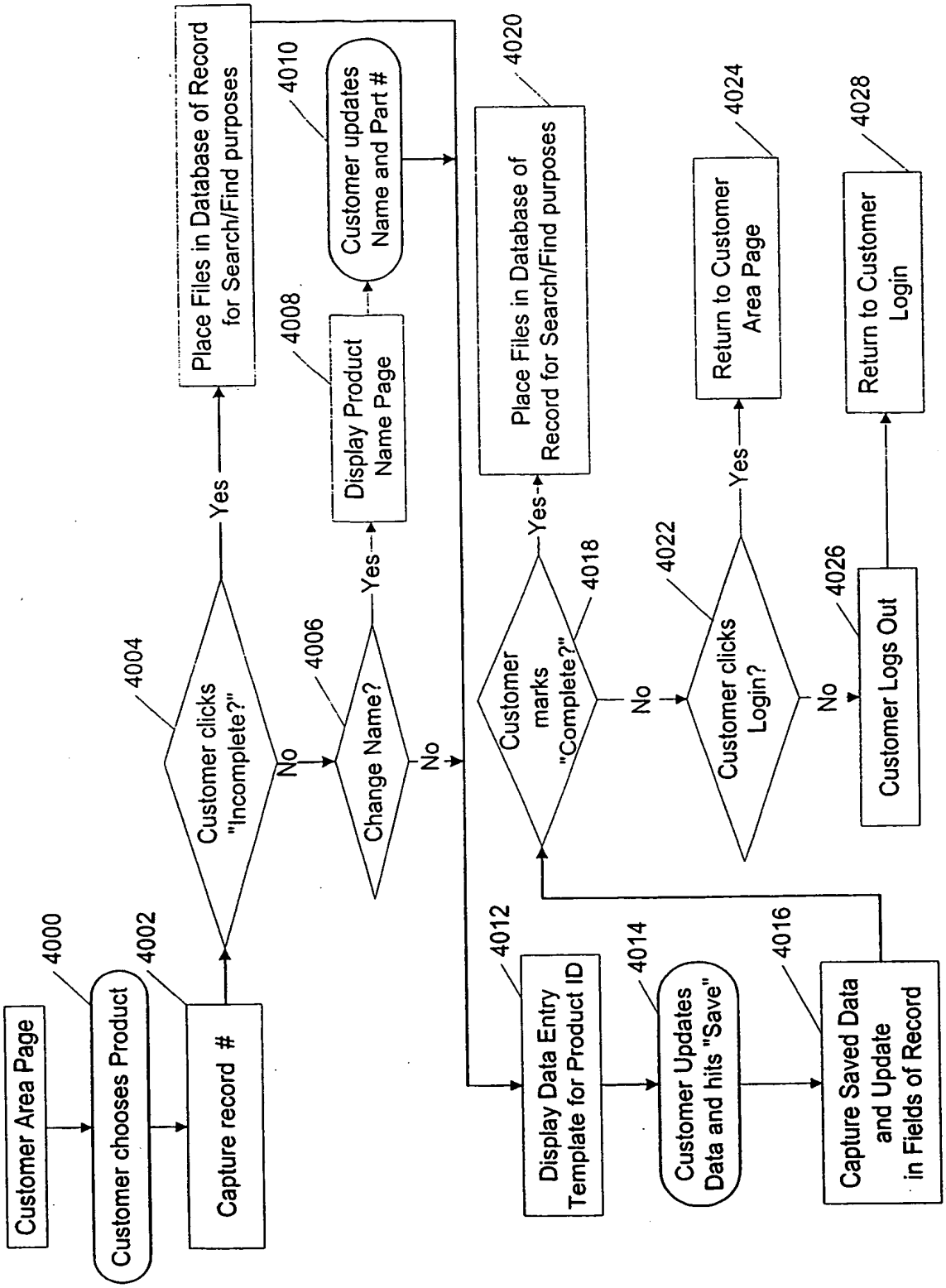
Customer Area Page
4000
Customer chooses Product
4002
Capture record #
Customer clicks "Incomplete?"
4004
Yes
No
Place Files in Database of Record for Search/Find purposes
Change Name?
4006
Yes
No
Display Product Name Page
4008
Customer updates Name and Part #
4010
Customer marks "Complete?"
4018
Yes
No
Place Files in Database of Record for Search/Find purposes
4020
Display Data Entry Template for Product ID
4012
Customer Updates Data and hits "Save"
4014
Capture Saved Data and Update in Fields of Record
4016
Customer clicks Login?
4022
Yes
No
Return to Customer Area Page
4024
Customer Logs Out
4026
Return to Customer Login
4028

Fig. 22

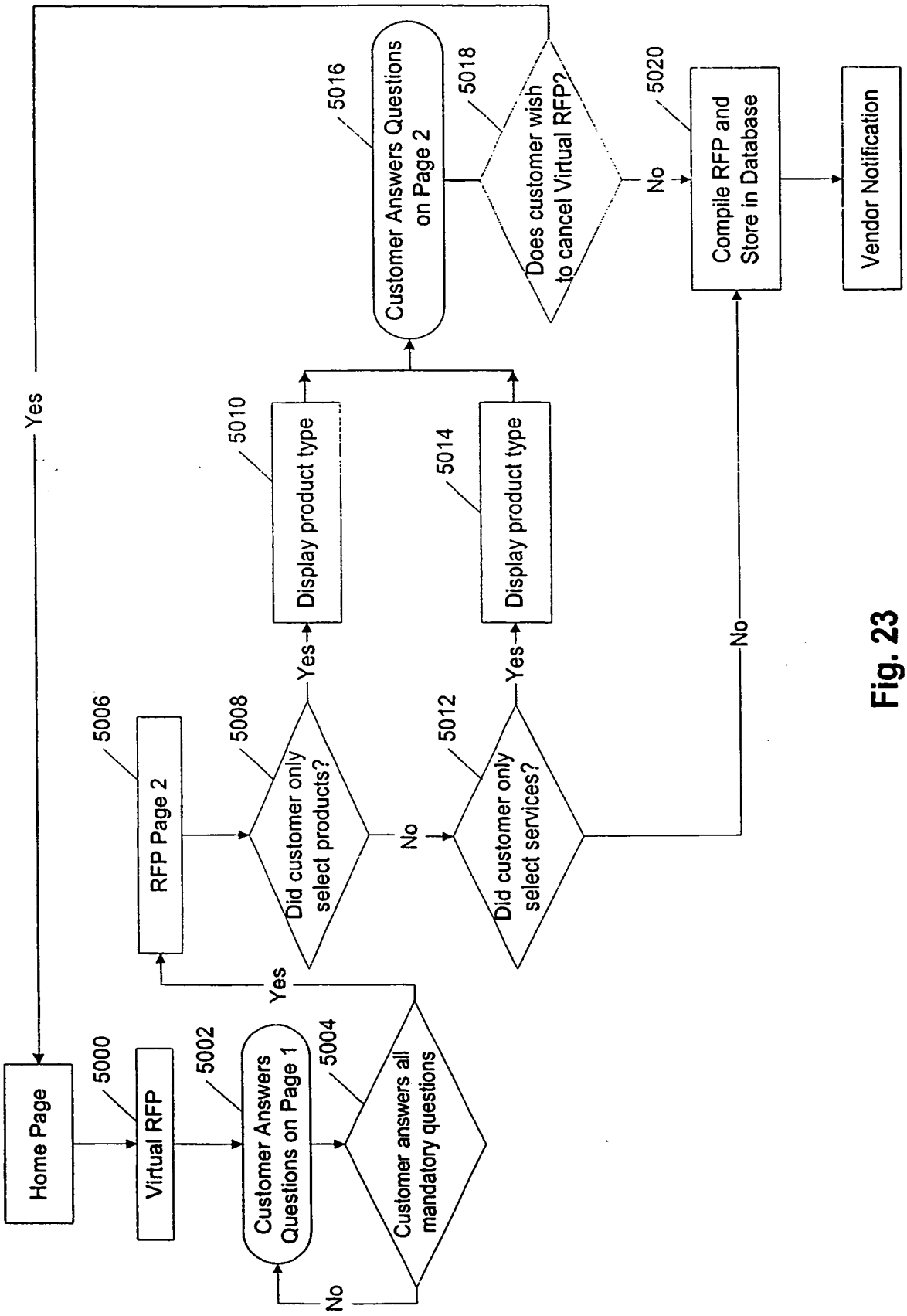
Home Page
5000
Virtual RFP
5002
Customer Answers Questions on Page 1
5004
Customer answers all mandatory questions
No
Yes
5006
RFP Page 2
5008
Did customer only select products?
Yes
No
5010
Display product type
5012
Did customer only select services?
Yes
No
5014
Display product type
5016
Customer Answers Questions on Page 2
5018
Does customer wish to cancel Virtual RFP?
No
Yes
5020
Compile RFP and Store in Database
Vendor Notification

Fig. 23

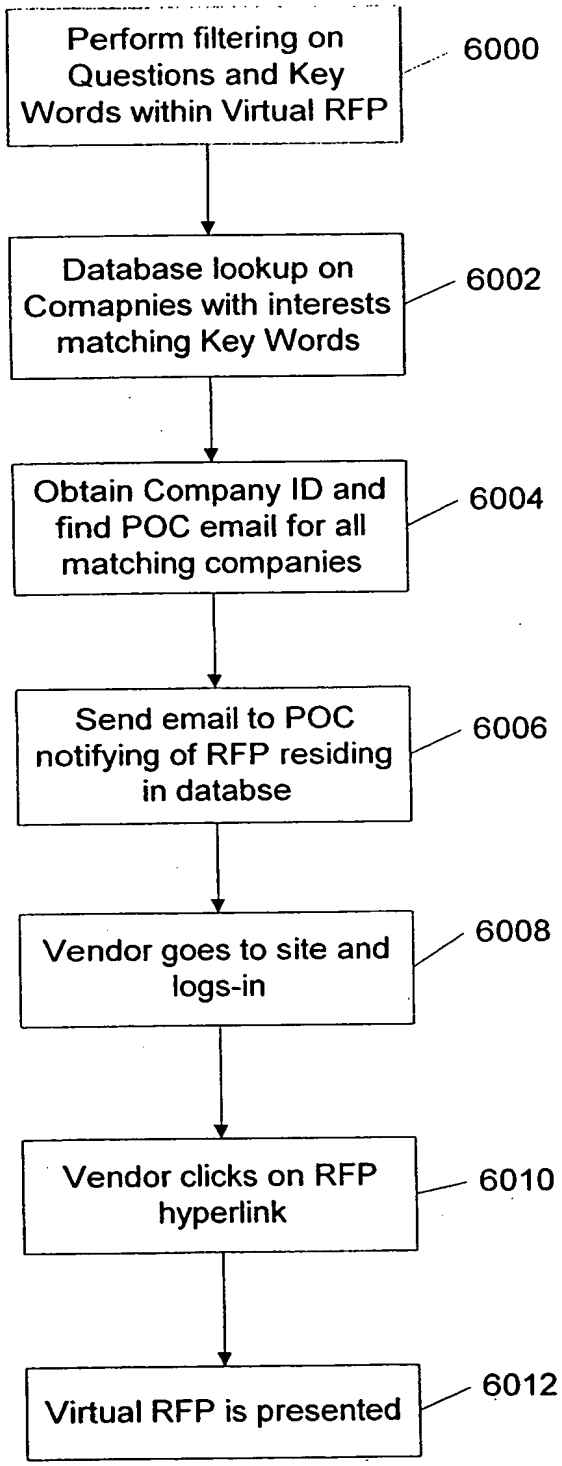
Perform filtering on Questions and Key Words within Virtual RFP
6000
Database lookup on Comapnies with interests matching Key Words
6002
Obtain Company ID and find POC email for all matching companies
6004
Send email to POC notifying of RFP residing in databse
6006
Vendor goes to site and logs-in
6008
Vendor clicks on RFP hyperlink
6010
Virtual RFP is presented
6012

Fig. 24

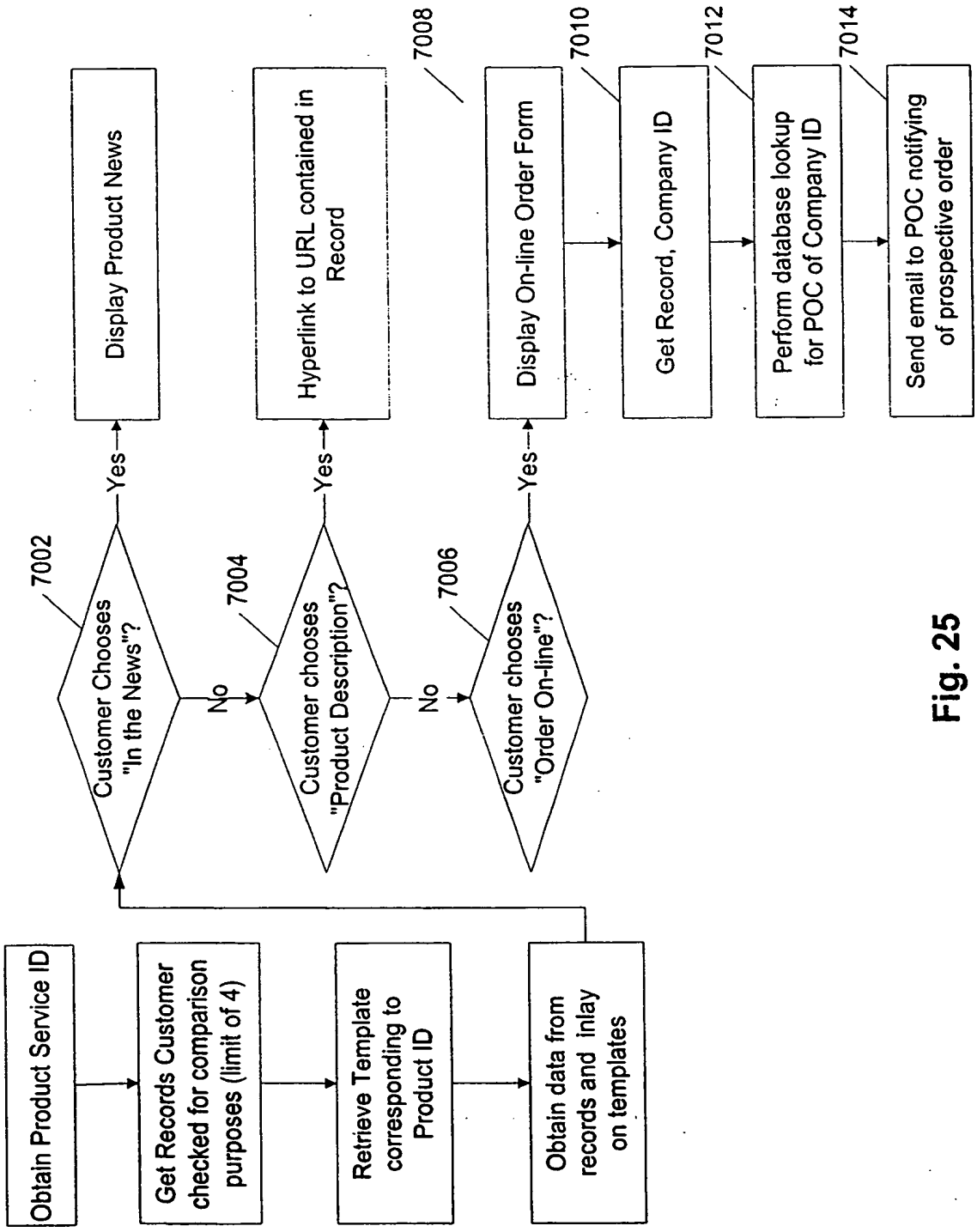
Obtain Product Service ID
Get Records Customer checked for comparison purposes (limit of 4)
Retrieve Template corresponding to Product ID
Obtain data from records and inlay on templates
7002
Customer Chooses "In the News"?
Yes
Display Product News
No
7004
Customer chooses "Product Description"?
Yes
Hyperlink to URL contained in Record
No
7006
Customer chooses "Order On-line"?
Yes
7008
Display On-line Order Form
7010
Get Record, Company ID
7012
Perform database lookup for POC of Company ID
7014
Send email to POC notifying of prospective order

Fig. 25

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

REVISED VERSION

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date
21 September 2000 (21.09.2000)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 00/055787 A2

(51) International Patent Classification[7]: G06F 17/60

(21) International Application Number: PCT/US00/06648

(22) International Filing Date: 15 March 2000 (15.03.2000)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
09/267,660 15 March 1999 (15.03.1999) US

(71) Applicant: TELEZOO.COM CORPORATION [US/US]; Suite 704, 1600 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22209 (US).

(72) Inventors: SHAMS, Elias, 4411 Cathedral Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20016 (US). VED, Rajeev; 12606 Gray Eagle Court #33, Germantown, MD 20874 (US).

(74) Agents: PADE, Jeffrey, A. et al.; Cooley Godward LLP, Attn: Patent Group, One Freedom Square, 11951 Freedom Drive, Reston, VA 20190-5601 (US).

(81) Designated States *(national)*: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States *(regional)*: ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:
— *with declaration under Article 17(2)(a); without abstract; title not checked by the International Searching Authority*

(48) Date of publication of this revised version:
26 September 2002

(15) Information about Correction:
see PCT Gazette No. 39/2002 of 26 September 2002, Section II

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

WO 00/055787 A2

(54) Title: SYSTEM FOR AN ON-LINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SEARCH ENGINE AND MARKETPLACE

(57) Abstract:

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

Applicant's or agent's file reference	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing *(day/month/year)*
TELE001/00WO		21/05/2002
International application No.	International filing date *(day/month/year)*	(Earliest) Priority date *(day/month/year)*
PCT/US 00/06648	15/03/2000	15/03/1999
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC	G06F17/60	
Applicant		
TELEZOO.COM CORPORATION		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that **no international search report will be established** on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. [X] The subject matter of the international application relates to:
   - a. [ ] scientific theories.
   - b. [ ] mathematical theories
   - c. [ ] plant varieties.
   - d. [ ] animal varieties.
   - e. [ ] essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
   - f. [X] schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
   - g. [ ] schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
   - h. [ ] schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
   - i. [ ] methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
   - j. [ ] methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
   - k. [ ] diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
   - l. [ ] mere presentations of information.
   - m. [ ] computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.

2. [ ] The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
   [ ] the description [ ] the claims [ ] the drawings

3. [ ] The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:
   [ ] the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
   [ ] the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

4. Further comments:

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority	Authorized officer
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	M. Rodriguez Nóvoa

Form PCT/ISA/203 (July 1998)

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see Guidelines Part B Chapter VIII, 1-6).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

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